ITALIAN POST-NEOREALIST CINEMA

LUCA BARATTONI

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Traditions in World Cinema

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Luca Barattoni

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Unless otherwise stated, all translations are made by the author.

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TRADITIONS IN WORLD CINEMA

General editors: **Linda Badley and R. Barton Palmer**
Founding editor: **Steven Jay Schneider**

Traditions in World Cinema is a series of textbooks and monographs devoted to the analysis of currently popular and previously underexamined or undervalued film movements from around the globe. Also intended for general-interest readers, the textbooks in this series offer undergraduate- and graduate-level film students accessible and comprehensive introductions to diverse traditions in world cinema. The monographs open up for advanced academic study more specialised groups of films, including those that require theoretically-oriented approaches. Both textbooks and monographs provide thorough examinations of the industrial, cultural, and socio-historical conditions of production and reception.

The flagship textbook for the series includes chapters by noted scholars on traditions of acknowledged importance (the French New Wave, German Expressionism), recent and emergent traditions (New Iranian, post-Cinema Novo), and those whose rightful claim to recognition has yet to be established (the Israeli persecution film, global found footage cinema). Other volumes concentrate on individual national, regional or global cinema traditions. As the introductory chapter to each volume makes clear, the films under discussion form a coherent group on the basis of substantive and relatively transparent, if not always obvious, commonalities. These commonalities may be formal, stylistic or thematic, and the groupings may, although they need not, be popularly

identified as genres, cycles or movements (Japanese horror, Chinese martial arts cinema, Italian Neorealism). Indeed, in cases in which a group of films is not already commonly identified as a tradition, one purpose of the volume is to establish its claim to importance and make it visible (East Central European Magical Realist cinema, Palestinian cinema).

Textbooks and monographs include:

- An introduction that clarifies the rationale for the grouping of films under examination
- A concise history of the regional, national, or transnational cinema in question
- A summary of previous published work on the tradition
- Contextual analysis of industrial, cultural and socio-historical conditions of production and reception
- Textual analysis of specific and notable films, with clear and judicious application of relevant film theoretical approaches
- Bibliograph(ies)/filmograph(ies)

Monographs may additionally include:

- Discussion of the dynamics of cross-cultural exchange in light of current research and thinking about cultural imperialism and globalisation, as well as issues of regional/national cinema or political/aesthetic movements (such as new waves, postmodernism, or identity politics)
- Interview(s) with key filmmakers working within the tradition.

INTRODUCTION

The title of the famous pre-neorealist movie *I bambini ci guardano* (1943) established children as the most sensitive and defenseless community of the 1940s. In the neorealist years and during the reconstruction, children and orphans were portrayed as kernels of hope, young creatures on the better side of history, ready to build on their fathers' sacrifices. In a morally charged reversal of roles, it is Ricci's son Bruno who provides guidance at the end of *Ladri di biciclette* (1948), as well as the young crowd of lower-class children witnessing the execution of Don Pietro in *Roma città aperta* (1945) symbolically marching on Rome for a second time in a profoundly palingenetic gesture after the Fascist profanation had inaugurated the regime in 1922. But when the heroic years of rebuilding came to an end, those children had to become adults and deal with different responsibilities. They may have reconquered Rome, but only to witness its despicable political quagmire; they earned the right to vote and dream about freedom and opportunity, only to find themselves ensnared in surreal and often preposterous ideological disputes, pockets of social injustice, and economic unbalance. They came from the outskirts or from the South looking for jobs, their pilgrimage often resulting in humiliation and loss. Neorealism was a cinema of tragedy with a vision of hope: the cinema of the economic boom seems a lot more pessimistic, a cinema of uncertainty and lack of perspective. Among the most prominent unifying motifs are the disillusionment and steadfastness with which filmmakers constructed images of a perplexed and confused society warily treading towards an unpredictable future. Cineastes aggressively invested in a careful dismantling of the institutions

that supposedly constituted the country's connective tissue, and they showed no restraint in depicting the failure of the new models of integration and the consequent social relapse, which culminated in displays of numbness and aloofness.

Directors working during the 1950s and 1960s – a generation of filmmakers who were all unmistakably marked by the neorealist sensibility – perfected the presentation of authentic urban settings in which characters were caught in an act of self-realization, assessing the fragility of their position. *Italian Post-Neorealist Cinema* is an attempt to establish twenty-five years of Italian motion pictures as a formal and aesthetic continuum characterized by an explicit modernist sensitivity. The period at issue roughly ranges from *Ossessione* (1943) and the early years of the neorealist canon to pictures from the late 1960s informed by a strong (re-)politicization of the cultural discourse and realized on the eve of postmodernism and the emergence of genre movies (*cinema di profondità*). Far from being a merely reflectionist cultural partition of the nation's impasse, or, in the words of film historian Gian Piero Brunetta, a 'signifier of the nation, or of putative national values,' the corpus of works at issue synthesizes the vision filmmakers adopted during dramatic and tumultuous times. Areas of cultural problematization such as practices of the self, consumerism and hollywoodization will be examined along with the institutional history, showing for example 'the commodification of Italy at an international level' as defined by Jacqueline Reich, and carried out by movies like *La dolce vita* as well as the 'repeated misinterpretation, negotiation and even resistance'[1] of US postwar influence eventually leading to a hybridized Americanization.

The book reflects on national identity, on the emergence of a new aesthetics achieved through a general broadening of the profilmic material and the use of the landscape, on the ethical implications of individual choices, and on the changes in behavioral codes and sexual mores against the background of an aggressively modernizing country. The analysis is organized around the economic and cultural trends surrounding the appearance of the films at issue, in order to anchor more fully aesthetic and formal observations in their generating conditions. Chapter 1, entitled 'Historic, Economic and Cultural Background' examines the ideological debate before and after the war and its repercussions on the film industry, investigating how the great collective dreams of the war's aftermath quickly turned into stagnation and disenchantment. The postwar political instability, intensified by the failure of the 1953 electoral law, dubbed *legge truffa* (swindle law) by the Left, and by the subsequent political gridlock, led to the conceptualization of a phenomenon known in English-language academic literature as 'a republic without government,' where forces of conservation and economic immobility would obstruct and erode attempts to achieve dynamic change. Guido Crainz and other Italian his-

torians who investigated the crisis of the 'two churches' (the Italian Communist Party, or Partito Comunista Italiano [PCI], and the Catholic Church) all significantly came to agree on the missed reforms during this era. A grounded account of the film industry is also provided, investigating the unifying vision that brought together producers, artists and unions to create a fruitful model of viral capitalism: a paradigm of cheap labor exploitation, cooperation with the international industry (*coproduzioni*), the capacity to respond to multiform demands, and the widespread use of the first releases circuit in order to recoup the costs of high financial commitments. A personification of this era is the tycoon Goffredo Lombardo, producer and distributor of many of the most renowned Italian 'auterist blockbusters' and shrewd entrepreneur who used to minimize his losses by injecting low practice comedies and even parodies of his art films into the market.

Chapter 2, entitled 'The New Wave Proper/Italian Style Debate and the Explosion of National Cinemas' links the birth of Neorealism with a broader reflection on and negotiation of modernity, in which cinema stands out as a medium capable of granting a different experience of reality, with the intention of plugging the cultural and identitarian gaps of the confused nation that emerged after World War II. Neorealism already carried within itself the germs of a late modernist poetics in terms of abstraction and subjectivity, marking the birth of modern cinema. The very trope 'Neorealism,' Masha Salazkina wrote, seems to have originated as a modernist reflection of its literary equivalent: film scholar Umberto Barbaro, founder with Luigi Chiarini of the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, coined the term in 1943 with post-revolutionary Soviet literature in mind, influenced by Dostoevskij but also by Proust and Joyce.[2] Therefore, previously insulated categories such as 'the heroic phase of Neorealism,' 'the Internationalist auteurs,' 'the New Italian Wave' and *commedia all'italiana,* 'Italian-style comedy' – and the groups of filmmakers commonly enlisted therein – can be disrupted and reconfigured through an approach underscoring the realist–modernist dialogue in the hierarchy of the image and, in the light of the de-fascistizing of society, the foundational nature of the new cinema. By the 1940s the debate on the renovation of Italian cinema was extremely diversified, with critics and intellectuals such as Giuseppe De Santis and later Antonio Pietrangeli making the jump into filmmaking and thereby confirming, by adopting the same trajectory, the idea of Neorealism as the first of the new waves. More than the apparent similarities in recruiting personnel, in the words of journalists and theoreticians turned cineastes like Cesare Zavattini, Giuseppe De Santis and Luigi Chiarini (all of whom are discussed as case studies), the heterogeneous and collaborative movement we still call Neorealism seems to characterize Italian cinema well into the 1960s, after it was temporarily stymied by repressive censorship in the 1950s. This is especially true if one adopts Gilles Deleuze's epistemic reading of Neorealism

as the birth of a new image – a voyage increasingly unhinged from socio-economic coordinates and resulting in a decentered consciousness characterized by individual immobilization and anguish.

Chapter 3, 'The Aesthetics Emerging after the War,' explores the impact of a modernized aesthetics that marked a visual renewal in Italian cinema. In light of Italy's cultural revolution, dictated by internal emigration and industrialization, filmmakers engineered alternative identitarian models stemming from new relations and behaviors. One of the goals of Neorealism was to empty the cinematic space, surreptitiously occupied by Fascist simulacra, and reclaim its lost purity by repopulating its locations with authentic inhabitants: cineastes from the 1960s were in a different situation, evaluating how economic westernization had conspicuously impacted said locales. Rural exodus, industrial Fordism, urbanization, mass consumption, and the ideological fossilization of the forces that made the Resistance and the Liberation possible were among the ongoing phenomena used as symbols of the transitioning country. The *miracolo economico* brings fast cars whose shiny surfaces and speed make them anything but exhilarating: they become traps and confessional spaces, when they are not openly mocked as evidence of the hypocrisy of family values. In order to highlight the realist-modernist oscillation, special emphasis is devoted to directors like Alberto Lattuada, Vittorio De Seta and Renato Castellani, who are too often mentioned among the *neorealisti minori* but were able to update their filmmaking styles with the freedom and receptiveness of the Nouvelle Vague, thereby validating their neorealist background as a dynamic heritage capable of reinventing itself and keeping pace with the emerging national cinemas. Attention is given to the most exemplary figure of Italian cinema for the years at issue, Antonio Pietrangeli, whose *Io la conoscevo bene* can be held as the perfect representative for the perspective of *Italian Post-Neorealist Cinema*. Pietrangeli was an articulate theoretician of Neorealism even before its outbreak, and then a cultivated auteur who successfully incorporated subtle social commentary. His protagonists are often marginalized and exploited women, which led to Pietrangeli eventually being called a feminist *ante litteram* with visionary film making.

Chapter 4 is entitled 'Ideological Perimeters: The Catholic–Marxist Protocol' and deals with films characterized by the indebtedness to or the desire to break free from Catholic and Marxist doctrines. A few examples from Italy's ideological debate are presented to explain why thinkers like Piero Gobetti deemed ridding Italy of former ideologies necessary to the country becoming a more civilized place. The obsessive repetition of old models was the only limited option offered to the Italian citizenship, as shown in the Don Camillo saga, where the pink Neorealism is a direct blending of Catholic white and Communist red. As early as 1952, with *Lo sceicco bianco*, Federico Fellini hacks through the normalized world of Don Camillo and is soon followed by

the Marco Ferreri of *Marcia nuziale* and *Una storia moderna – L'ape regina*. Under attack but still deeply ingrained in Italy's cultural codes, certain brands of Catholicism and Marxism return as an inescapable horizon. They resurface, for instance, as a spiritual cul-de-sac in Bertolucci; as an illusory protection in Florestano Vancini and the Taviani brothers, leaving its acolytes stranded without the comfort of political engagement; and as an omen of revolutionary hope in Pasolini. However, as shown in Chapter 5 'Negotiating Modernity: The Ethics of Disorientation and Entrenchment' which charts the models of unsettlement inaugurated by *La dolce vita*, the perception of past ideologies as well as the forces driving the economic renaissance of the country was one of general distrust. Neorealism originated from tumultuous historical events and provided a democratizing vision of shared values: by the end of the 1960s film directors and intellectuals were able to project the significance of the country's socioeconomic developments and its ideological position onto the international setting, formulating hypotheses on the ethical implications of Italy's options as a nation. The numerous adaptations of Alberto Moravia's works set the tone: Moravia's characters thrash about in a bourgeoise world unsusceptible to change; they are unable to distinguish from authentic and inauthentic, from stability and precariousness, and often retreat to a state of resigned stupor. Amidst revenant echoes of the neorealist tradition, the new social mobility generates figures of desperate pilgrims whose balance, at the end of their attempts of graduating to new models of development, will hopelessly be in the red, as in the works of Tinto Brass, Gian Vittorio Baldi and Augusto Tretti. There is also a class that is altogether incapacitated to fit in the loop of production and consumption, that of the Pasolinian *ragazzi di vita* from the outskirts of Rome, dealing with a paradigm of social exclusion. Such model is shown not only in works by Pasolini himself but also in movies by Bolognini, Rondi and Heusch, and Serpi and Rocco. Even in comedies, laughter yields ground to horror: obsessed with the darker side of industrialization, disposable wealth and technological innovation, a new aesthetics of the marginal breaks through.

Chapters 6, 'Reimagining National Identity', and 7, 'Behavioral Codes and Sexual Mores', are dedicated to the discursive articulation in the formation of postwar Italian identities, understood as 'a relational process created in a dynamic exchange within the world and the collectivity within it, and carried by and through symbolic activities.'[3] In the heroic years of Neorealism, the dramatization of social conflicts was not divisive but was rather aiming to create new communities whose values could be shared by everybody. Once the idea of collectivity is lost to personal interests and the nation-building process is seen as doomed, individuals and micro-communities take over. Relationships undergo a process of fragmentation, revolving around immediate and dubious satisfaction. Social crystallization and advancement; archaic repressions of cultural modifications; the reconfiguration of femininity and

masculinity; and even historical events like Otto Settembre are among the key passages recognized in identity formation. In Chapter 6, specific consideration is spotlighted on war movies that exemplify the failure to establish a basis for a shared memory of the conflict and the Fascist regime: The chapter also looks at attempts to achieve a national synthesis in a country characterized by the North-South divide and uncertain about its founding values. In Chapter 7, the analysis probes into major creative contributions that have responded to the challenges posed by the contradictory economic modernization and the reconfiguration of social relations, offering their interpretations of identity, the conflicting claims of integrative models, and the defining of individual and collective roles. Disengagement and inadequacy generate an aura of malaise, as in Antonioni, or a radical lack of faith in man and the necessary rewriting of his DNA, as seen in Ferreri. Emphasis is given to the cineastes ready to rupture the representational unity of the woman in Italian cinema, bypassing the monolithic image based on the Catholic aesthetics articulated along instances of property, morality, sin, punishment, suffering and atonement. The process of dismantling cultural practices and institutions, as well as traditional roles that had been embedded for centuries in the Italian psyche, generated anxiety. From this standpoint, genre and movies played an important role in taming women's newly acquired independence: the *pepla* served reassuring images of peasant Italy; spaghetti westerns proposed bizarre homophile communities; Raffaello Matarazzo's melodramas functioned as a justification for home confinement and repression of sexual desires; and Mario Bava horror films took the punishment for women's apparently 'uncontrolled' sexuality to new sadistic heights. The explosion of the B-movie phenomenon, labeled *cinema di gastronomia* and *cinema di profondità* by Lino Micciché because of its eminently consumable nature, concludes the golden age of Italian film.

Finally, in the Conclusion, a vision is offered through the bittersweet memento of such a glorious era of cinema together with its legacy and a brief outlook on contemporary Italian film. In the background is Guido Crainz's *paese mancato*, which has now triumphantly graduated to a country in an advanced state of decomposition.

Notes

1. Paolo Scrivano, 'Signs of Americanization in Italian Domestic Life: Italy's Postwar Conversion to Consumerism,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 40, No. 2, April 2005, 317.
2. See Masha Salazkina, 'Soviet-Italian Cinematic Exchanges, 1920s-1950s,' in Saverio Giovacchini and Robert Sklar (ed.), *Global Neorealism: The Transnational History of a Film Style* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 37–51.
3. Norma Bouchard, *Negotiating Italian Identities*, in *Annali d'Italianistica*, Vol. 24, 2006, 11.

1. HISTORIC, ECONOMIC, AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The 'Missing' Italy and the Dark Side of the Boom

Late Italian modernist cinema can be regarded as the failure of antagonism against standing values and institutions, a cynical and yet amusing journey into the inexorability of the status quo. In Lorenzo Cuccu's words, this era of Italian cinema created 'an updated version of the Subject of Modernity, characterized or obsessed by *amour-propre* and by a need of self-affirmation that makes him a little bit of a Prometheus and a little bit of a Narcissus.'[1] When the journey began, filmmakers, even in relatively prosperous and peaceful times, were concerned with the ephemerality of progress, the plethora of schizophrenic behaviors brought about by an industrial Italy, and the continuity with Fascism. It would be erroneous to establish a direct set of homologies between the shortcomings of economic and social progress and the growing disconnect between protagonists and their surroundings. However, an exploration into the political and economic causes that prepared the terrain for the rift between man and society, with references to the films that made such issues the explicit content of their discourse, will enlighten one facet of the sense of unease and impending defeat that characterizes Italy's late modernist cinema. An analysis of this rift shows that there was eventual disillusionment on the part of the protagonists – revolutionaries, struggling idealists, the expectant soon-to-be workforce – who lost their initially hopeful perspectives and attitudes.

'A confused, shortsighted country.' Asked by foreign students to find the most comprehensive and yet specific denominator of Italy, this was the

definition that prominent writer and journalist Vittorio Zucconi provided during a speech given in 2008 at Middlebury College. Zucconi insisted on exposing blurred boundaries between the fundamental powers that are generally held as the supporting structure of an evolved democracy; revealed the inconsistencies in the mission that media is invested in; and denounced their feeble effort at counterbalancing opportunistic measures passed by the Italian political class. Most importantly, he underscored the general uncertainty of direction and lack of reform that, with few exceptions, seem to affect all post-Fascism parliamentary governments. The confusion and shortsightedness that Zucconi referred to have deep roots in the country that emerged after World War II and are derived from the peculiar ways in which Italy tried to consolidate its social peace internally. Factors of instability that would later pave the way for the financial crises of 1992 and 2011 resulted from unaddressed socio-economic contradictions. A suddenly promising economy was heavily infiltrated by practices of clientele-centered business practices and saddled with ominously vast pockets of profligate spending – not tangible, but for current expenses – crippling the national deficit. Subordination of political parties to power castes for electoral advantages became strategic; civil society rapidly distanced itself from the teachings of the Catholic Church but never fully acknowledged the Church's parasitic nature. In the background, the growing dissatisfaction with the ungoverned and therefore uneven economic development and the long streak of the State's entrepreneurial failures fueled a fatalistic resignation and the pernicious myth of an Italian people capable of great deeds only in desperate conditions. The absence of an established kernel of values to be shared in the nation-building process added to the short-term mentality that affected core reforms and financial planning. The cry for reassuring social foundations echoed amidst the economic catastrophe and the spiritual rubble left by World War II and was to remain unanswered. The reconstruction process struggled with outlining a stable course of action: the Resistance had been very erratically experienced as a rebirth process – with vast areas playing no direct role in the overthrowing of Fascism – and therefore could not work as a basis for the pragmatic purpose of shaping a shared identity. When translated into a nation-building articulation, the nobility of the anti-fascist discourse could not escape a structural weakness whereby the majority of the Resistance fighters were in the difficult position of balancing loyalty to the Soviet Union and demands of the population, eager to put the hardship of war behind itself as soon as possible.

The process of identity formation was hybridized. Placed at the mercy of its Atlantic allies during key moments of its political life; constantly blackmailed by the Vatican during parliamentary proceedings; dealing with the activism of the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) shrewdly adjusting to long-term strategies of cultural influence but reluctant to distance itself officially and substantially

from the Soviet Union: one may say the Italy was almost subjected to a sort of colonialism sui generis. Those exogenous and endogenous agents were trying to secure a share of Italy's dislocated individualities, looking at them not as an opportunity to form a mature citizenship but to acquire new *clientes* through twisted forms of fidelization: the fragmented body of the population remained mired in destructive, ideology-driven, rearguard identitarian contestations. The strategy of the Communist Party to occupy institutions and centers where information was produced, such as unions, state bureaucracies, universities, local administrations and a significant share of the media, proved astute but inadequate. After the 1946 electoral failure of the Partito d'Azione, its intellectuals were annexed by the PCI and turned into trophies to be showcased when the most radical interpretations of Marxist doctrine would become outdated. The Partito d'Azione was a political formation whose ideologists were heirs of Carlo Rosselli, the author of *Socialismo liberale* (1930). Rosselli's speculation – that individual freedoms and social justice be merged in an economically efficient environment – was conveniently bastardized into a liberalization of socialism and socialization of liberalism, which proved handy years later to justify the technocratic approach of Center-Left prime ministers like Carlo Azeglio Ciampi and Romano Prodi. What remained of the PCI's Utopian thrust got lost in the bureaucratized powers it wooed as its supporting cast, quickly promoting among its followers an acquiescing mentality far removed from the galvanizing proclamations of its leaders; in the civil liberties department, the PCI's libertarian perspective on paper became quasi nonexistent in practice as it chose to protect its flanks by adopting a traditionalist view on interpersonal relationships, emancipation and sexuality.

After recovering quickly to pre-war indexes of production and per capita levels of income, and also restoring communications, starting from 1951 until 1962 several key factors contributed to an impressive incremental growth of Italy's gross domestic product by an annual average of about 6 per cent and a rise in industrial production by an annual average of about 8 per cent. Among such factors were financial stability enforced in the late 1940s by the strict monetary policies of Budget Minister Luigi Einaudi; a steady influx of American capital under the Marshall Plan provisions; newfound oil and gas deposits in Milan and Sicily, as well as an aggressive energy policy carried out by the National Agency for Hydrocarbons (Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi, or ENI). A prudent but advantageous protectionist policy on import and trading taxes that stabilized the domestic market for a number of critical years also helped, as well as a strategic adhesion to international trade agreements once a satisfactory level of protection was achieved internally. Finally, streams of cheap labor in the form of Southern immigrants eager to leave their derelict homes moved North to look for employment in the manufacturing districts of Lombardy, Piedmont and Veneto. In the wake of these favorable conditions,

the discord between a steadily improving economic situation and a rapidly deteriorating political system – with the latter too often intent on parasitizing the former – puzzled the scholars who interrogated Italian history. Numbers are very stubborn when evaluating the reasons for Italy's legendary instability: from July 1953, the last cabinet presided over by Christian Democrat leader Alcide De Gasperi, to August 1969, when Mariano Rumor, known as *gommina* or 'rubber eraser' for his malleable temperament, swore on the Constitution on the occasion of his second mandate, Italy had witnessed eighteen different governments with an average lifespan of about ten months, with a total of ten different prime ministers. The situation of *democrazia bloccata* with an aggressively growing Communist Party guided in populist fashion by the wily Palmiro Togliatti as main representative of the Italian Left recompensed the Christian Democrats beyond their natural constituencies. Even though the PCI counted on an extremely organized and loyal base and despite how dreadful the Christian Democrats' governance had previously been, they could have the final word in every debate and effectively blackmail voters by prefiguring apocalyptic scenarios in which the Cossacks freely moved about the Trevi Fountain in the case of a Communist victory. As a result, when not entirely constituted by representatives of the latter, the cabinets were always solidly hinged around the party of relative majority with only marginal contribution from other political forces. The status of 'halted democracy' was captured with impeccable cynicism by Luciano Salce's *Colpo di stato* (1969), which imagined a Communist victory during the 1972 election: the PCI triumphs but, unwilling to take additional responsibilities and cautioned by Moscow about the geopolitical risks of such a move, refuses to seize power and happily retreats to the comfortable role of whistle-blower. Salce also lambasts the strategy of cultural hegemony by showing a studio manager of Italian television airing a folk singer and shamelessly inciting her to be 'more anarchic, more left-wing, more anti-bourgeois.' On election night, when the PCI's victory seems inevitable, she seamlessly switches from sappy love tunes to songs describing the revolutionary occupation of churches as well as priests and nuns forced to get a job. However, her performance starts after she is taken to the studio by her brother driving a *lambretta*, one of the brands of consumerism and Italian export.

Under the watchful American eye and its diversified approach of mass attraction – from financial aid to military pressure to artifacts showcasing American lifestyles being dumped in the cultural and entertainment markets – Italy 'had' to choose the route of a capitalist country. Freedom of enterprise was deregulated and uncontrolled at the beginning to maximize its stimulation capacity and create a significant social bloc experiencing the comforts of affluence and ease, with mechanisms geared at subtracting human capital from the Communist ranks firmly in place. The revolutionary option never seemed overly realistic: and yet, given that Italy was the non-Warsaw pact

country with the largest Communist Party, even system reforms would be devised not only to avoid damaging key constituencies but also to weaken the PCI's agenda. Except in a few cases, such as with the increase of the years of state-administered education and, partially, with the land reform, such measures would have minimal benefits and significant side effects. Italy established a model of economic development that has since been termed a 'mixed economy,' in which, together with the staples of free enterprise, the State maintains a significant power of intervention, with holdings and emergency plans to develop depressed areas without an endogenous push to industrialization. Italy pursued neither a pure liberist model of an unrestricted job market and marginalized unions nor a social democracy, like that of Sweden, where the marginal tax rate on personal income could go as high as 57 per cent. Fabrizio Barca called Italy's model of economic development a 'compromise without reform,'[2] neither state-directed nor ultra-liberist, driven by autonomous, hypertrophic public companies subbing for the central state in terms of planning and regulating, creating a macroeconomic template whereby growth is first generated by internal demand – until the late 1950s – and then supported by export to foreign markets. Economists like Luigi Einaudi were light years away from the fundamentalism of 'Voodoo economics,' and, in fact, they did not dismiss interventionist policies or the retention of key sectors in public hands if the earning power of the public companies was solid. Even setting aside the role that the Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale (IRI) played as the controller of private ventures, in Italy's mixed economy the State retained a golden share in many neuralgic sections and actually was the main entrepreneur in the chemical and steel industries, just to name two of the most important interests.[3] Public welfare was also institutionalized through the *partecipazioni statali*, or public financial shares and holdings, which was another form of state intervention and tutelage in private economy and another way of leaving unresolved 'the problem of avoiding violent and recurrent economic crises and the problem of developing depressed areas.'[4] Mechanisms of such 'contamination' are multiform and confirm the stereotype of Italians as a people with an uncommon gift for fantasy, as in the creation of companies funded by banks that, in turn, would finance themselves with their stocks while at the same time appointing their executives to the companies' boards. Also, the reverse process was not uncommon, with executives from the company sitting on the bank's board and in this way gaining preferential access to credit. Needless to say, in a classic ending worthy of *commedia dell'arte*, very often such processes would take place after both the banks and the companies were financed or even bailed out by the State. Along the same lines, Barca and Sandro Trento termed the always growing allocations for public companies the 'Trojan horse'[5] of party-dominated and clientelistic practices, according to which allowances are handled for practical necessities of factions, lobbies, party leaders and

their cohorts of small-time, local 'satraps.' The 'Italian-style' mixed market economy had some success only to rapidly set a course for abysmal failure at the rise of globalization, leading to a hasty de-nationalization in the late 1990s. The ramifications of such phenomena were manifold but all in the direction of an overarching deterioration of social life: the procedures to win governmental contracting – 'the gravy of Italian economy'[6] – and tenders became more and more opaque, with political affiliation – often blurred by criminal sponsorship – considered a more reliable qualification than efficiency and competitiveness. The forced industrialization of the South without suitable development plans led to the creation of plants where the costs of manufacturing cars and other commodities could not be matched by any sale price. The task of managing the impetuous growth, channeling the inequalities between different geographic areas and 'clearing up' decaying institutions was by no means simple; however, the contradictions of the 'missing' country in fact eerily resemble the disjointed Italy we know today and its apparently irresolvable dilemmas. The economic imbalance and social hostility between North and South seems beyond the point of no return, certified by separatist movements openly rejecting the necessity of a unified Italy; the exhausting debate on the sustainability of agricultural-versus-industrial modes of development has slowed planning policies for the depopulated countryside and overcrowded cities. The disproportion in social security between hyper-guaranteed workers and other forms of 'cannon fodder' labor has created generations of youths with no attractive prospects; it looks prohibitive to make even a dent in the hypertrophic taxation to maintain bureaucratical apparatuses and political castes.

One aspect calls for immediate attention when browsing the literature on the phenomenon cursorily called the 'Economic Miracle' and in general on the circa twenty years of Italian history – mid-1940s to mid/late-1960s – elected as the target of the present volume. It is a bitter feeling of helplessness and disenchantment, even of shame and remorse for a missed opportunity, with parties competing at polished forms of fraudulent patronage instead of busying themselves with negotiations framed by an idea of curbed inequalities and public good. The painful paradox is that, even though Italy was capable of orchestrating an economic reconstruction and gained enough momentum to temporarily keep a check on its systemic problems, the political and entrepreneurial classes were responsible for not properly channeling the newly available financial resources and not implementing a foundational culture of civic honesty and efficiency, thereby initiating the country's decline while at the peak of its maximum productivity. Such an approach left the clear impression that the forces guiding Italy were incapable of steering the momentous economic growth toward a productive, stabilizing direction, functioning more as greedy exploiters of the immediate fruits of modernization for personal and factional interests than as facilitators of a long-term,

virtuous model of development. If a researcher had to extrapolate a master narrative from the many historical analyses that have delved into the political hesitations and connivances of Italy's first Republican governments, it would probably be the lack of reformist courage and the triumph of dubious profitability over a vision capable of permanently 'westernizing' the infrastructures and the archaic mentalities of a country that had to reinvent itself starting from a 'year zero.' The process of 'cross-fertilization,' as Richard Pells terms it, whereby each Western country with a neuralgic geo-political position determines its path to modernization and accomplishes its own occidentalization under the watchful eye of the United States, was counterbalanced in Italy by oppositional, contradictory thrusts deriving from the absence of a collectively participated pact legitimizing a brand of virtuous patriotism. This project does not advocate an 'end of history,' Italian-style, with the country passively adjusting to the role of America's geo-strategic platform and fideistically adopting the logic of advanced capitalism: at the same time, failures in the institution of lean and effective political practices conducive to a national reconciliation after the end of Fascism are at the roots of Italy's ongoing deterioration. The cruces that were embryonic at the time fully blossomed into the situation of contemporary Italy: a place where high technological innovation coexists with 'third world' developing countries' practices; a site of contradictions that resists with admirable impermeability any attempt at serious reform; and a nation suffering from an inferiority complex and a form of xenophilia idolizing countries that were able to provide themselves with modern infrastructures.

Michel de Certeau said that Italian cineastes were in the enviable position of hegemonizing culture at the end of World War II, given the hope invested in the future, the tabula rasa of old discourses and the hatred against Fascism. But getting rid of the old regime proved to be impossible, and hope was soon replaced by disillusion when the architraves of the Fascist state were seamlessly retained. Starting in the 1940s and lasting through to the early 1970s, Italian filmmakers courageously tested the potential of cinema as a vehicle of cultural elaboration and ethical foundation, embarking on an identity-forming enterprise by tutoring the Italian people on crucial questions such as the ethical implications of personal aspirations, the role and responsibilities of the individual, and the lack of preparedness when confronting the sudden advent of a vehemently transforming country. Initially, the very nature of such modernization drew fatalistic, bitter reviews: the skepticism about the sustainability of the 'miracle' manifested itself, for instance, in the representation of entrepreneurs, mostly scripted as rogues boasting managerial skills of uncertain origin. The critique leveled at basic staples of a flexible capitalist economy, like regulated access to credit, creation of business, incentive to consumption and subsequent accumulation, was not of orthodox Marxist origin.

It rather indicated a general unsuitability of Italian businessmen as ethical models of productivity, with capital bearing the stigma of fraud, betrayal, and murder as though an industrial society were a sin of hubris against Italy's peasant and artisanal vocation. The Catholic culture was also responsible for this state of things: the first papal encyclical where the role of the businessman enjoys a partial 'rehabilitation' is the *Centesimus Annus*, issued in 1991 by John Paul II. In fact, the figure of the entrepreneur often enjoyed dark or parodic traits in the Italian cinema of the 1950s and 1960s, coming across more as a witch doctor, an offshoot, a protean emanation originating from chaos – and a sexual predator for good measure – than a skilled organizer calibrating his operations to market rules. Renato Salvatori had already played the loutish Simone in Luchino Visconti's *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960), eventually turning into a rapist and murderer and thereby 'mediating' with blood the irreconcilability of his peasant culture with the indifferent modernity of Milan. In Giuliano Montaldo's *Una bella grinta* (1964), Salvatori plays ruthless industrialist Ettore Zambrini, whose avidity and ambition culminate in the assassination of his wife's lover, the crowning achievement of a long trail of manipulative and abusive behavior toward workers, lenders, and family. In the former film, Salvatori was a proletarian and here he is a representative of 'mature' capitalism, but the two tend to coincide: Zambrini allegorically christens with blood 'the leap from small capitalism of artisanal family origin to big industrial, financial capitalism,'[7] celebrating the wife's pregnancy with the inauguration of a new plant. Thus, Montaldo invests Salvatori/Zambrini with the role of modern shaman performing a ritual of archaic sacrifice to overcome a state of chaos not dissimilar to the mimetic disorder René Girard mentions in his study on sacrifice. In light of his success and of society's incapacity to contain him, Zambrini's disorganized plans and uncontrolled fury imply that the mechanisms of industrial programming are the propitiatory rites of our times. In Luciano Salce's *La cuccagna* (1962),[8] Umberto D'Orsi is a disastrous maneuverer whose grandiose and always failing business ideas, modeled around a misappropriated image of lurid capitalism 'American style,' find their only chance of success through under-the-table bribes passed to politicians in order to 'speed up' some licenses and contracts: the last we see of him is when a *carabinieri* van unceremoniously takes him to jail. D'Orsi is often caught by the camera in the act of raving about future profits. Like the secretary of the Partito Nazionale Fascista, Achille Starace, famous for his cult of an active lifestyle, D'Orsi is always running from place to place, trying to secure imaginary business opportunities. Even if the connection with the Fascist mandarin is not made explicit by Salce, the filmmaker mockingly juxtaposes the 'evil' nature of speculative capitalism with other low-key and 'honest' jobs, like that of typist, which the protagonist Rossella, played by Donatella Turri, finds early in the movie and then unwisely quits to follow the windbag played by D'Orsi. But

the Fascist subtext will be made explicit shortly thereafter: D'Orsi returns as an engineer/sexual predator in Pietrangeli's *La parmigiana* (1963) and as the 'Fascist capitalist' in *Il successo* (1963) co-directed by Dino Risi and Alberto Morassi, where he is a vulgar and unpleasant businessman taunting and humiliating his old schoolmate Giulio Ceriani – played by Vittorio Gassman as another one-sided figure of greedy accumulator-wannabe needing money to finance his aspirations as developer – and forcing him to perform a skit based on Fascist gestuality before finally lending him part of the sum he asked for. In Elio Petri's *Il maestro di Vigevano* (1963), based on the novel written by Lucio Mastronardi, education seems incompatible with manual labor as well as with entrepreneurship and profit. The new Italy is personified by the vulgar Bugatti, an industrialist who tries to buy good grades for his son, a pupil of the *maestro* Mombelli of the title, and ultimately destroys the Mombelli household by providing the schoolteacher's wife with capital for her own start-up. The undoing of Mombelli is then accelerated by the relationship between his wife and Bugatti and sealed by a fatal car crash that kills the two lovers. Also, Damiano Damiani's *Il sicario* (1960) injected heavy doses of *noir* iconography into his depiction of the business world.

Many authoritative historians across the entire ideological spectrum share a common view regarding Italy's missed opportunities. Their diagnostic observations do not differ when assessing the disastrous policies that resulted in social turmoil, widespread inequalities, and lack of basic, general services. From a leftist, progressive position, Paul Ginsborg and Guido Crainz blame the overt and short-sighted resistance carried out by the far Right, the quasi totality of the Christian Democrats (Democrazia Cristiana or DC) and the union of industrialists or Confindustria, against the possible reformism that was a staple of the Center-Left governments – DC with the addition of Socialists – starting at the end of 1963. Those coalitions are considered by Ginsborg and Crainz a key moment of sorts for the creation of a potential, albeit inchoate and haphazard, 'laboratory of successful reformism.' But on the occasion of the very first vote of confidence, it became evident that the once ambitious agenda of the Center-Left had been consistently watered down. In the wake of the Center-Left's failures, Crainz would go as far as coining the metaphor of 'un paese mancato,'[9] a potentially stable and productive country that is *missing*, and a country that *missed* realistic goals in terms of democratization, civil and economic freedom, all the while agonizingly persevering in seemingly unchallengeable ideological stagnation and political instability. Ginsborg would give a very positive assessment of the dynamism shown by DC Prime Minister Amintore Fanfani with the creation of the agrarian reform boards and of Alcide De Gasperi's institution of the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno, an instrument for fund allocation and infrastructural intervention, only to disconsolately note the 'eternal return' of one of Italy's most pernicious malaises

– the layers and layers of purely parasitic mediators bringing enterprises to a halt and wasting or embezzling resources in the process:

> These were the local Christian Democrat bosses, the bureaucrats, building speculators, and lawyers who were in receipt of funds flowing from central government and who mediated between the state and the local communities. The old landed notables were replaced by this new élite, dependent for its power on local government, the special agencies of the State and the faction leaders who controlled the flows of the Cassa's spending in the 1950s and the 1960s – Aldo Moro, Emilio Colombo, Silvio Gava.[10]

Indro Montanelli, *maitre à penser* of the conservative milieu, resignedly stated about the 1956 tax reform of Minister of Finance Ezio Vanoni, who had previously helped Enrico Mattei establish the gigantic holding company ENI: 'Just like other reforms, this one missed many of its proposed goals.'[11] Such an assessment that not only applies to single reforms but also to the overall direction of entire cabinets where the energy, creativity, and vision of specific measures were counterbalanced by lethargic delays in other key sectors and ultimately got lost in the great Italian tradition of wild taxation to sustain public spending, and subsequent downtrend in growth. Spending measures were often aimed at destabilizing the minority's constituencies and bypassing down years in electoral consensus, and the purely assistentialist policies that the Cassa embarked on after the first building, irrigation and construction interventions fulfilled that purpose. In addition, the lack of democratic control on closed, centralized state apparatuses and administrations, a phenomenon that reached its climax during Fascism, enjoyed a political continuity especially during the first postwar decade, culminating in a dramatic separation between the electing body of citizens and their representatives. Where infrastructures could sustain development, individual income would hike dramatically, whereas in the South the lack of opportunities coupled with the perception of the ever increasing delay in catching up with the modernized areas of Italy led to feelings of angry fatalism. Those feelings were only made worse by an unenviable feature of the economic transformation: unlike other European countries, for thousands of families and individuals the 'Economic Miracle' represented not only an improvement of current conditions but a far more radical turning point, in the sense that, whereas in Britain or France growth for many was synonymous with better salaries, better life conditions, and more savings, in Italy it was the event enabling families to afford running water, electricity, or a household appliance for the first time in their lives. The young and passionate forces of the Meridione, eager to reinsert themselves into history and contribute to the modernization of the country, acquired a

clear conscience about the South's 'renewed marginalization'[12] with disastrous attempts at implementing public or heavily subsidized industries. The stance which considered the South a burden on Italy caused civil behavior to deteriorate, fanning the flames of resignation, and led to another wave of immigration to South America and Northern Europe. Part of the disastrous policy was the quixotic enterprise of the *cattedrali nel deserto*, the chemical, steelworks, or manufacturing plants isolated from manufacturing circuits and thus neither creating satellite industries nor helping local economies. Historian Paolo Farneti labeled those calamitous policies a cataclysm, and his description of the Center-Left is that of a political laboratory for conservation, immobilism, and fraudulent pacts, emphasizing once more the litany of missed reforms:

> A phenomenon of increasing contractualization among parties came about, government and minority included. The concrete manifestation was the ideological weakening of the three main forces of the political spectrum in Italy: political Catholicism, militant socialism and secularizing laicism: in a word, the fall of 'great battles of ideals' to the benefit of 'daily management'. It is at this point that we can speak about a party system in Italy, where political identity is defined by the mostly contractual relationships between political forces rather than by the political forces – social base relationship. This is the frame where the Center-Left operation was carried out. Clientelism, growing relationships of interest instead of solidarity, corporativization of trades guaranteed electoral stability. But the decline of ideological thrust also culminated in a very specific result that lies in the *lack of reforms*.[13]

The monopoly of power held by the Christian Democrats was ideologically founded on an incestuous relationship with the authoritarianism of the pre-war period, and the party did not dither about an instrumental use of the unliberal heritage for its survival:

> In the field of political and civil rights, while the restored rule of law and the marked constitutional safeguarding of one's liberties gave to the country the tools to preserve the conquered freedom, codes and rules of the past still in force legitimized governmental practices that were occasionally heavily illiberal.[14]

Besides the persistent influence of the Church, another heatedly debated question in post-World War II Italian history is in fact how Fascist the country remained after the Liberation. Two aspects of continuity are particularly striking and concurrent with the social turmoil, and both were direct emanations of the Ministro degli Interni. The first was the continuous, unlawful use of the

casellario politico centrale, a database created by Prime Minister Francesco Crispi in 1894 that enjoyed unprecedented success under Fascism, with its illicit filing of political suspects, former Resistance fighters, 'anarchists' and 'subversives,' hippies, homosexuals, and, in general, of those citizens who would protest against majority parties and disobey the teachings of the Catholic Church or the deliberations of their employers. The second was the illegal, inquisitorial, and ultimately repressive use of the *prefetti*,[15] state servants who would report to the central government about the social and political situation of their areas and who had the authority to cancel regular elections if the mayor was deemed too leftist or not 'coachable' enough. The *prefetti* would often include prurient, private details of their 'suspects,' obtained by their informants, among which police officers and priests of the local parishes were the most zealous. In Pietrangeli's *La visita* (1963), the story of a man and a woman meeting through a 'lonely hearts' ad, the male protagonist receives first-hand information about the woman's 'morality' from the *maresciallo* of the carabinieri stationed in her town. The *casellario politico centrale* would cease to exist in 1968, one year before adultery and concubinage would be expunged from the list of felonies. Workers, students, enlisted soldiers, and candidates to public posts who simply did not fit the description appreciated by a political power committed to marginalize those who could be loosely associated with the Left or the Resistance were discriminated against by a paternalist culture and overbearing ethical organisms acting outside of the Constitution. Crainz goes as far as painting a situation – from the 1950s throughout the late 1960s – in which citizens were not granted the 'full enjoyment of their rights.'[16] The persistence of Fascism, prosecuting citizens during the regime and after its fall, is seen in *Anni difficili* (1948) and *Anni facili* (1953), also by Zampa. Both movies are based on novels and scripts by Sicilian writer Vitaliano Brancati, describing the imperturbable opportunism of the Fascist nomenklatura and the obtuse complicity, indifference, or frank cowardice of the majority of the population: in the words of the Fascist *podestà* who obliges his subordinate to join the Fascist party and then fires him for the same reason after the fall of Mussolini, 'we, like servants, want evil for our master.' One could almost pinpoint the homology between the economic deresponsabilization characterizing state organs and beneficiaries and the socio-ideological carelessness of the *italiano medio* (average Italian), trying to replicate on a smaller, individual scale the sterile and unproductive favoritism rampant at every level of the state administration. Along the lines of inconclusive reforms, one could also argue that the Concilio Vaticano II of 1962 turned out to be a tactical adjustment and not a substantial change in the practices and policies of the Church. It was the catalyst of the Lefebvre schism because, for the first time, the Church, abandoning the symbol of Christ the King and his social royalty, renounced its temporal supremacy over the State,

but the language of the Concilio did not distance itself from the most rigid declarations about the unity of the Church, its centralized power, its position and privileged role among other cults, ultimately proving to be a testimony to its irreformability. Likewise, no concessions were made for the advancement of individual rights: that which changed was allowing a different, more elastic interpretation of the doctrine for those 'travel mates,' like intellectuals and politicians forming temporary and strategic alliances with the Church, to push similar agendas.

Filmmakers treated the 'miracle' as the revolution Italy never had, fascinated by the rapidity with which the most problematic phenomena characterizing the economic overhaul seemed to take over and pervade all strata of the population. Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1960) articulated the advent of an age during which awareness of one's own image encourages man to be even further removed from himself; *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* expanded on traumatic loss of the culture of origin in the 'ascent' from one class to another. Social status as a mental prison one obsessively reinforces with loops of crippling expectations is in Vittorio De Sica's *Il boom* (1963), where the character played by Alberto Sordi sells one of his eyes to maintain the luxurious lifestyle he cannot relinquish; the homogenizing tendency of the newly acquired purchasing power was antagonized by Pier Paolo Pasolini with *Accattone* (1961) and *Mamma Roma* (1962). An embarrassed state of shame and regret for a 'train' that was not boarded and that will never again stop lingers in Dino Risi's *Il gaucho* (1964), about a troupe of Italian actresses and script-writers coming to terms with their own failures during a trip to Argentina for a film festival. *Il gaucho* stars Vittorio Gassman as Marco Ravicchio, the PR of the film company. During the troupe's drive through Buenos Aires, previously introduced by aerial shots highlighting its linear architecture and harmonious proportions, Marco rebukes an Italian immigrant who dares call him '*paesano*,' implying that the cumbersome heritage of Italy's peasant culture is a painful reminder of the emergency situation Marco and Italy are trying to put behind them. Then, Marco meets with his old university mate Stefano, played by Nino Manfredi, who welcomes his old friend in a crumbling apartment while desperately trying to deny his present condition of quasi-destitution by bragging about the nonexistent new home he is building 'in Olivos':

> Stefano: I am very happy that I came here, I have no regrets . . . what could I have done better in Italy anyway? [*After Marco teases him about feeling homesick*] Why? Had I stayed in Italy, maybe. Were there any opportunities?
> Marco: Well . . . it depends.
> Stefano: Eh, there is affluence (*benessere*) in Italy; here all the newspapers say that. [*Then the two pretend to reverse their roles, telling each other*

> *that 'smart guys like them would have made it' had the one who emigrated stayed in Italy and had the other one done the opposite*]
> Marco: But what *benessere* are you talking about, Stefano? You must have read old newspapers: In Italy there is a *malessere* that carries you away!
> Stefano: Ah, because here it's not the same? What do you think? At least in Italy it must be periodic!
> Marco: Yes, a period of twelve months per year!
> Stefano: Ah, OK, here it's not of twelve, here we also get the Christmas bonus! [*wordplay between the Italian word for 'twelve,' 'dodici,' and 'tredicesima,' the name of the extra paycheck workers receive at Christmas time*]

As dejected and crestfallen as they are unskilled, Marco and Stefano wallow in self-pity: but *Il gaucho* also boasts in a complex role an old Amedeo Nazzari playing Engineer Marucchelli, a nostalgic Italian immigrant who made it for real in Argentina as a cattle owner and meat processor and is now a billionaire. The bitterly comic tensions between the three are a traumatic testimony to the revision of national and individual destinies when a country entertains grandiose economic dreams. *Il gaucho* exemplifies the pungent farsightedness of the genre reductively named *commedia all'italiana,* 'Italian-style comedy,' an investment that, not shying away from successes and contradictions, euphoria and angst, literally put the country on its shoulders: Risi leaves Italy in a supposedly prosperous time and boldly exposes the delusions and the imbalance of its people. The tone of *Il gaucho* is hardly evasive, often disquieting, sometimes even funereal: Risi does not make direct references to the contemporary political situation, but the troupe of actresses, together with their Communist scriptwriter, looks like a group of dead souls. Whereas cheaper comedies can propagate a self-indulgent image of Italian people, with hypothetically national traits held as immutable and the excuse to absolve the nation of its historical sins,[17] *Il gaucho* is a reactive comedy that destabilizes the notion of Italian identity, and ridicules committed cinema for good measure, reducing it to a means to get by.

With a broader scope of inquiry encompassing the socio-economic destiny of Italy, Alberto Lattuada portrayed in *Mafioso* (1962) a 'success story' of social adaptation and cultural appropriation. It is a slice from the life of Antonio Badalamenti – played by a subdued Alberto Sordi, infusing his usually histrionic demeanor with cold, tragic overtones. The protagonist, a Sicilian man who, after emigrating to Northern Italy, integrated himself into a manufacturing plant as an efficient and responsible supervisor. But no matter how invested he has become in his new 'narrative,' familialism – structured through the system of power of organized crime – will always trump any other form

of morality; thus, Badalamenti has to obey his old insular godfather and, after being sent to the United States, kill an adversary of the criminal clan he has to perpetually represent. The mobster not only taps Sordi as hit-man in return for the favor he once made by sending him to the North, he also mentions a land dispute to be resolved in favor of Antonio's family, accentuating, just like the claustrophobic *mise en scène* adopted throughout the Sicilian stay, the identification of the mafia with the real State, like an inescapable stranglehold. Another strong indictment of Italian culture is made in New York when Sordi is finally able to see the cityscape and among the first things he notices is a billboard with Sophia Loren. By having one of Antonio's CEOs, an American-Sicilian mafioso, provide the name of the person to be eliminated, Lattuada goes as far as saying that the feudalism enforced by the Don on Sordi is of the same nature as the violence ingrained in the practices of advanced capitalism, certified and sanctified, as in Francesco Rosi's *Le mani sulla città* (1963), by the Catholic Church.[18] Similar courage is shown by the director in the brief encounter that Badalamenti has with a young and drunk black man, on the street, right before carrying out his mission: without appropriating the battle that black people were engaging in the United States against segregation, Lattuada is able to establish a parallelism between Badalamenti and the black man as both being pressured by old and new cultures. *Mafioso*, without an article, declares the eternal value of the qualification as a reminder of the resistance of tribal values in Italy, whose appeal will not be effaced by any economic – but superstructural – boom. Criticism of the use of stereotypes is unwarranted here because *Mafioso* does not use regional clichés to stabilize its cultural premises in a generically reassuring way; rather, it shows how Italy is desperately trying to run after said stereotypes.

Italian cinema often engaged with the penetration and expanded role of ideology but seldom portrayed the political class caught while scheming its machinations, also because until 1962 a form of preventive censorship was in force, intervening in the creation of the work from the scriptwriting phase. At the same time, features such as pomposity and natural inclination to corruption seem somehow embedded in the representational texture of politicians on the screen: just like entrepreneurs, they come across as a self-aggrandizing convergence of mediocrity and unscrupulousness. In movies like *Scanzonatissimo* (1963, decimating the first year of Center-Left) by Dino Verde, *Totò a colori* (1953) by Steno, or *Gli onorevoli* (1963) by Sergio Corbucci, representatives were innocuously ridiculed or singled out as odd, colorful characters. The presence of Totò and comic actor Mario Castellani in the latter two confirms the farcical tone without a clear reflection on the direct fallout that pernicious political practices had on the population. The vignettes are sporadically redeemed by the anarchist fury of Totò, who in *Totò a colori* unleashes his decrowning rituals on the Onorevole Trombetta, whose 'honorability' is

deconstructed by Totò to its very roots with one of his signature battle cries: 'Onorevole? Ma mi faccia il piacere!' ('You, *honorable*? Please!) Then, as it became increasingly clear that the entire political system was an orchestrated fraud, cineastes lavishly made up for the lost time with plenty of interest. The satire becomes anthropologically corrosive, suggesting hypocrisy as a naturally ingrained trait in the class of Christian Democrat politicians in 'La giornata dell'onorevole,' an episode from *I mostri* by Dino Risi (1963). Its protagonist is an old general who is confident that a DC Rep. will help him thwart an impending episode of corruption of which he has just learned. The general waits for the Member of Parliament in the latter's studio in order to reveal to him the details of the fraud. The Christian Democrat party representative delays the meeting with all sorts of improbable engagements. At the end, after the fraud is committed, the general has a heart attack because of the long wait, which he endured for an entire day with an unbending sense of duty, without even the comfort of a glass of water. The episode, singled out by Rémi Lanzoni as giving 'a moral dimension to the film without ever imposing a moralistic deduction'[19] is a superb example of cinema of disillusion and exclusion, aimed at exposing the country's ethical shortcomings.

After a semblance of artistic freedom was restored, the effects of political corruption on vast communities were dealt with by Francesco Rosi's aforementioned *Le mani sulla città*. After working for Visconti in *La terra trema* (1948), Rosi co-authored the script of Luigi Zampa's *Processo alla città* (1952), revolving around the far-reaching tentacles of the Neapolitan criminal organization knows as *camorra* and the code of silence presented as 'balanced' systems of integration. The events narrated in *Processo alla città* took place in 1905 but resonated with the contemporary moment in which criminal organizations' infiltration of the State had transformed them into de facto twin institutions operating side by side and at all levels with local and central administrators. In 1958, Rosi returned to the *camorra* once again, directing his opus one *La sfida*, a spin-off of American gangster movies mixing the parasitical control of the fruit and vegetable market in Naples with a torrid love story involving the protagonist, a *guappo* (thug or mobster) who has sharpened his teeth in the cigarette-smuggling business. *La sfida* also contains heavy criticism of the Church, depicted 'as a traditional, ritualistic church trapped in its heritage on the one hand, and a mercantile institution on the other.'[20] *Le mani sulla città* is a step forward in terms of negative representation of religious power: Rosi describes it as just another client of organized crime, to which it is profitably connected. The film is also an indictment of badly planned industrialization, used as a façade for supposedly improved life conditions, which loomed over citizens as a constant threat. The picture tells the story of real estate developer Nottola, who puts a quest to be appointed the city's Construction and Planning Manager before everything else, his own family

included. The crumbling houses he had previously built collapse and kill some of their blue-collar tenants, but, after sacrificing his son – the engineer behind the projects – and finding new political sponsorship, he is triumphantly elected and the local archbishop blesses the new foundations. Rosi rescues the linear plot with a disturbing interpretation of the relationship between actors and landscape – the land, the sprawling city, the darkened contours of houses often juxtaposed against Nottola and his party acolytes, with the angular panning of the camera suggesting the transformation of space into an insalubrious area of fraud, insecurity, and death. In Rosi's hands, the frame becomes a breeding ground of perpetrated scheming, with the camera galloping through seemingly inoffensive conversations, broken up dialogues, and suspended times in which injustice is forming in front of the viewer's eyes: the deliberate pace of an film-inquiry, a courtroom debate or a police procedural becomes a distressing sequence of cuts into a city's living flesh. Rosi's frugal and stylized *mise en scène* harbors a metaphysical commentary on political power as illicit practice and underhanded conspiracy. *Le mani sulla città* was a successful hybrid, and agonizingly suspenseful, in an age of experimentation: stretching the ethical confines of the medium, Rosi created a perfect mechanism where critical realism, documentary style, and modernist aesthetics gelled into a powerful denunciation of a perverse status quo. *Le mani sulla città* represented one of the possible outcomes of the Neorealist revolution: visually, with the effort of interpretation required to decipher the relation of necessity between characters, things, and landscape cramming the frame; and ethically, with a broken system of values in place and the duplicitous nature of language and behavior. One can observe Rosi's incrimination of the new political and economic order in the speech given in front of a scale model of the city, where the rhetoric about providing facilities to a farming district is just a masquerade hiding the real purpose of the enterprise; that is, to maximize profits after the land will be developed. The aerial shots of the city at the opening credits communicate a sense of omnipervasive danger, an infection that does not spare anyone, anticipating the interpretation of organized crime as a globalized phenomenon. A quantum leap in showing the *camorra* as an alternate state was Silvio Siano's *Lo sgarro* (1962), where the criminals casually extort money and steal cattle completely undisturbed, and there is the oppressive atmosphere of conspiracy later to be found in political thrillers of the 1970s. After one of the godfather's henchmen accidentally kills a little girl, an angry mob lynches all the members of the local *camorra*: they end up being clubbed to death, repeatedly shot with double-barreled shotguns, finished with face punches, tossed from the seat of a carriage and smashed under a bridge – without a single policeman in sight, but with the mob oozing a pleasure for violence that titillates the viewer and prefigures the exasperation of the *poliziottesco* genre and the resigned desperation of the 1970s.

Figures 1 to 4 The *camorristi* Saro Urzì (top left, Fig. 1) and Charles Vanel (bottom right, Fig. 4, on the ground under the bridge) are taken down by the fury of the people's justice, either collectively (top right, Fig. 2) or through the anonymous shot of a single well-intentioned citizen (bottom left, Fig. 3).

As mentioned, the 'boom' is not an afterthought but gets lost among the unaddressed plagues. Crainz was not the only one surrendering the destiny of Italy to the irreversibility of its past: economist Mariano Marchetti called his overview of Italian economy regarding the years at issue *Il futuro dimenticato*; that is, the *forgotten* future, the triumph of short-termism, abuse and inefficiency.[21] Marchetti investigates key concepts, which, at the base of Italy's downward-spiraling economy, have also become metaphors for its twisted forms of relational solidarity. One is the *tenuta del sociale*, or the devastating costs deriving from public bail-outs, a procedure usually sold to voters as a moral blackmail because it avoids lay-offs; then there are the disastrous, pure relief policies of *assistenzialismo* in the South, where the central government 'makes it rain' on the different regions by creating temporary jobs of dubious usefulness or financing random projects of little use. The *difesa del posto di lavoro* becomes an ethical short circuit based on a paradoxical justification prioritizing the preservation of one's job post, no matter what costs this entailed for the rest of the population. Stefano Pivato went even further, coining for his inquiry-book the image of a *stolen* – literally *snatched* – economic miracle, wrested out from the hands of the Italian people by the partitocratic system, and documenting how Italy remained behind in scientific and technological innovation.[22] If Edward C. Banfield's classic study on backward societies of the late 1950s and his subsequent pointed reference to amoral familialism

were a snapshot of the disinterest in transcending immediate, 'corporate' interests in Southern Italy, it is possible to argue that such mismanagement of social capital was decanted into the acquisitional patterns of the modernizing Italy emerging after the material debris of World War II was cleared away. As already observed by Crainz and Silvio Lanaro, the familialism studied by Banfield easily contaminated the vital tissue of the country at multiple levels, turning into a de facto corporativism thriving on the lack of cultural and political proposal. Every lobby, union, party and family capable of expressing contractual power in terms of favors and votes would emerge as a 'micro-state' with their own rule and their own entanglement of petty and contractualized interests and then shamelessly pass off its personal needs as national interest, to the point that observers considered respecting the family and respecting the law patently antinomical:

> Also in Italy modern life is eroding the splendid solidity of the family. The change could clearly have serious consequences. If the family weakens, will anarchy reign supreme? Or will Italians finally develop a suitable respect for public authorities and institutions?[23]

Christopher Duggan has expanded on the concept of a missing Italian nation after the war, linking the problematic foundation of the country to the lack of unity that characterized Italy from its very inception. Speaking about the vilifying spectacle of the in-war sordidness and ethical indifference of the South, Duggan describes the throes of an uncertain future, based on shaky or nonexistent ideals, where colonization actually proves the most pragmatic answer:

> What was more disconcerting in this moral decay, at least to those with patriotic leanings, was the sensation that more than eighty years of unity had barely touched the surface of society. There was little apparent remorse or shame at the disaster that had befallen the country . . . As the Calabrian writer Corrado Alvaro noted with a mixture of horror and amazement, public opinion seemed to think that 'national dignity' and 'national honour' involved no more than trying to curb the swarms of shoe-shiners and prostitutes that were thronging the streets. It was almost as if people were happy to be liberated not just from Fascism but from 'Italy' ('I hope the Anglo-Americans will never go away . . . [T]hey have a vision of life that is different from the wretched one that we have known up to now,' wrote a Neapolitan in a letter in January 1944).[24]

The after-war result is a disenchanted Italy, captured by the memorable definition of a 'beautiful and useless country,' as heard in Marco Tullio Giordana's

La meglio gioventù (2003), wherein academics beg their best pupils to emigrate to France, Britain or the United States. The result is a 'semi-permanent legitimation crisis ever since its inception' of such country:

> The basic 'rules of the game' have never been accepted by most Italians in terms of a 'rational' management of the state and the political system. They have, instead, been partly replaced by other 'unwritten' rules that have institutionalized patronage, clientelism, inefficiency and informal modes of behaviour and exchange.[25]

Italy's Political System and the Rhetoric of the *Isole Felici*

Participation of the Socialists in the Center-Left coalitions demonstrated how 'uncontaminated parties' would quickly turn into de facto bureaucratic lobbies, their creative and democratizing energies all but sucked out. The perspective of bypassing popular consensus through favoritism, patronage, and inflated spending proved too tempting for the totality of forces joining a ruling coalition for the first time, and the Partito Socialista Italiano or PSI was no different. Judging by the Lega Nord or Northern League some 30 years later, it seems that nothing has changed in that trajectory. A hilarious snapshot of the failing horizon of the Center-Left project and of the political class's shameless transformism appears in Marco Bellocchio's *La Cina è vicina* (1967), where Glauco Mauri, playing a professor running for municipal office as a Socialist candidate, gives a legendary electoral speech in which he candidly admits his previous joining of all the four parties of the Center-Left – and also the PCI, even though it was 'an experience disdainfully interrupted after the tragic facts of Hungary' – not for personal advantage, but because 'every party fully integrates and completes the other one, that which one party rejects, the other welcomes, because in every one there is a place for the Catholic and the layman, for the young and the old, for the rich and the poor.' The professor has an unmarried sister, and his blue-collar aide chooses to climb the social ladder by getting her pregnant; meanwhile, the aide's lover, a poor secretary, does the same by marrying the professor. The last scene is a memorable shot of the two women doing pre-birth exercises with a ball: beside them is the book *Sarò madre*. Depicting the impossibility of class struggle – as the popular saying goes, 'In Italy, no revolutions are possible because we all know each other' – *La Cina è vicina* parodies the narcissistic theatricality of Italian people in their pursuit of 'values,' implying that there is no real alternative to the atrophy of the collective ideals of the past. The characters' ambitions are depicted as tragically laughable: the Center-Left seems firmly entrenched in a disheartening mediocrity, its spiritual domain is a review of petit bourgeois ideals – a socially rewarding marriage, aspiration to join the rich gentry – one could read

in a feuilleton. The complete immobilization of the system is personified by a bedridden parson who, evoking the pedophilic nature of the priests' attention toward children, exchanges languid kisses for candies with a group of little kids, 'The chicks of Mary.' Bellocchio introduces the audience to the culture that generated the hypertrophic growth of nonproductive, artificially inflated ranks of affiliates to political parties, municipal governments, public companies, and, in general, parasitical organisms all designed as vehicles for political affiliation and patronage. The baneful 'party-driven cloning of democracy'[26] is a 'state of being' whereby not only different parties but also different factions inside the same party had to be represented in the boards of trustees of public companies, hospitals, state-funded newspapers, administrative bodies supervising schools and universities, etc. where the reproduction of servile power relations created an atmosphere of courtesan conformism. The direct consequences on the range of economic action are summarized by Valerio Castronovo:

> The expansion of artificial bureaucratic income and public spending influenced by clientelistic purposes had the result of subtracting a significant amount of resources from more productive expenditures, thus impeding the growth of capital stock, a better use of savings and the increase of investment assets.[27]

As mentioned, the professor of *La Cina è vicina* had been a member of all the parties of the spectrum comprising the Center and the Left, and including the PCI. It might have seemed that Bellocchio was getting ahead of himself by lambasting the Communists as just another gang of ineffective politicians, but the cineaste – even though his attack was from a position of the radical Left – was simply being honest. Crainz is quick to conjure up a 'diversity' of the Italian Communist Party from the systemic deficiencies of the Christian Democrats and the overambitious but hastily abandoned reformist vision of the Socialists, but such diversity in terms of honesty and transparency was extremely short-lived. It was also unclear what political offer the PCI could realistically put on the table. Historian Nicola Tranfaglia, whose analysis is characterized by criticism toward the Right and the Confindustria, most clearly synthesized the inescapable inadequacy of the Left even without implicating its formal adherence to the Warsaw pact:

> Besides the sometimes fair criticism of the American myth, the two major parties of the Left could not juxtapose any solution of easy accomplishment against that project. From an economic standpoint, their ideas were more explicit on what they did not want than on the model they wanted to accomplish. Furthermore, liberism was also preferred among the few Italian economists who recognized themselves in the programs of the

> Left. Ultimately, left-wing forces were not able to present to the Italian people a clear and realistic alternative for the immediate future and for a long time confined themselves to the role of critics of the Christian Democrats, incapable of building a viable alternative to that which was being carried out.[28]

The PCI was often the enthusiastic supporter if not the creator of bills where spending was disguised as social concern, and whose unsustainability eventually wore out the cultural difference of the party. While the PCI grew more and more similar to a substantially conservative force, its constituencies were dissatisfied with its revolutionary zeal or, rather, lack thereof. At the same time, its inconsistencies and prudent stands on economic themes contributed to creating citizens with a bizarre demand for more consumerism but also more social revolts. After China's cultural revolution, the PCI saw fringes and factions burgeon from its left side, searching for a different, more 'intriguing' type of Communism and aggressively campaigning against the phony revolutionaries of PCI. Those tiny formations were looking not only at China but also at Albania or even North Korea for inspiration, in a grotesque quest for 'the need for Communism,' as ridiculed in the aforementioned generational fresco *La meglio gioventù*. The PCI, untested in the national government after the general elections of 1948, was extremely dynamic in local and regional governments in central Italy with plenty of success stories: for instance, it had the merit of applying on a large scale the *Legge n. 167 sull'ediliza economica e popolare* or the law enabling the building of 'downmarket' tenement blocks (promulgated in 1962 and subsequently amended in 1965 after a ruling of the Corte Costituzionale) to solve the most pressing housing problems in the areas where it was leading the local administrations. But their general way of dealing with power was as degenerate as that of their older brothers, the Christian Democrats: the pompous label of 'anthropological diversity' skillfully circulated by the party through its numerous publications and sympathizers among the intellectual class proved to be only a marketing device with no real reference to current affairs. One episode reported by Crainz perfectly sums up the degree of political decomposition and the self-conscious work of cultural camouflage the PCI applied itself to. By the mid-1950s, the mechanisms of corruption surrounding invitations to bid for public tenders were very well oiled and wildly practiced all over the country: they represented a comfortable way to control votes and preserve the myth of industrious government. The areas governed by the PCI – important urban areas like Bologna, Perugia, Ancona, Florence and other cities in Umbria, Marche, Toscana, and Emilia Romagna – were no different; the system was so efficient that it also allowed minority parties in local governments to collect backhanders proportionally according to their electoral weight (the case of the shared participation in the subway in Milan is probably

the most famous instance). There, the PCI established its own peculiar system of illicit funding by rewarding with tenders and contracts its wide network of cooperatives involved in key sectors such as retail, construction, insurance, and finance. The relationship between the party and the cooperatives became so incestuous that scholars saw in it a de facto superimposition of roles – the *sistema emiliano*[29] – in which the perennial 'awardees' are so deeply connected with their political and administrative counterparts that, since other competitors will not receive any form of consideration, no illicit funds are necessary to win the tenders. When the *sistema emiliano* had already been in place for some twenty years and running at full throttle, Guido Crainz takes us to the meeting of party leaders held on March 1 and 2, 1974, where the incumbent law of public funding of political parties is being discussed. This list of unforgettable speeches is opened by Armando Cossutta:

> Over the last years many federations have created a system to collect funds that should worry us. There is a polluted element in the relationship with our public administrations where the party organization is involved, and then there are single party members who look after their private interests. A clear cut is necessary with any type of unlawful connection.

Not everybody shared Cossutta's enthusiasm, probably because he was the party member responsible for managing the illicit funds coming from Moscow; therefore, the other participants must have perceived his moral commitment as not extremely authoritative. To no one's surprise, the person in charge of Emilia suggested a more gradual approach: but it is with two other interventions that this already remarkable *Direzione nazionale* becomes truly legendary. The PCI created a system with which it could feast on public money while looking formally impeccable in the process. This is what Nilde Jotti, who would be elected to the Presidency of the Chamber of Representatives five years later – an office she would hold until 1992 – had to say about the unlawful connections and the pursuing of private interests by party members and public administrations governed by the PCI:

> If there are such bribes that are actually itemized in the estimates of private companies, [it is necessary] to demand that the bribes be spent in social ventures like schools and day-care.[30]

Later, Elio Quercioli gave an unparalleled lesson in *realpolitik*, flaunting the same know-how that comes in handy a few years later when, from 1980 to 1985, he served as vice-mayor of Milan during the infamous years of the PSI regime over the city, a regime that made Milan the capital of illicit business and eventually led to the epoch-making Tangentopoli inquiry:

> There will always be deals from which bribes are turned, bribes will always exist and will go to others. We shall continue to have that tax paid, saying: do not give to parties but build centers for social and collective activities. The truth is that permits are not granted without a green light from the Communists . . . We shall not close our eyes.[31]

Quercioli's brutal frankness in acknowledging a situation of generalized corruption, the absurd downplaying of a felony as if it were the collection of just another generic 'tax,' the surreal and Jesuitical demand of using dirty money to build social infrastructure, and, above all, his tenacious determination to be part of the whole process no matter what unethical practices are involved paint a picture of accomplished political integration into the Christian Democrats' system.[32] The grotesque pretension of boasting a moral distinction because other parties would not dare to say that money should be used to build schools and recreational clubs is only an aggravating circumstance. Even if the PCI could not count on the illustrious sponsorship of the Motion Picture Association of America and their fast-track camaraderie with DC-guided cabinets to spread their own gospel, they more than kept pace with the other protagonists interested in a share of Italian identity. Whereas the United States was almost effortlessly able to flood the Italian market with cultural artifacts and dump its models into circulation in Italian culture, hard-working cadres from the PCI had ingeniously come up with a strategy that covered all the sensible spheres of action, from the engineering of an intellectual élite whose task was to reassure constituencies of the party's authoritativeness and competence to the implementation of a profitable network of trade partnerships with the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries. The massive investment in the production and diffusion of ideas through newspapers, magazines, publishing houses and different forms of associations – political, cultural, recreational – was a successful countermove, contrasting Italy's affiliation with the Western bloc. The final result was that, when it came to seizing quotas of the imaginative world of the population, Italians had the luxury to choose between two always alluring options:

> In order to consolidate their followings, the two main blocs into which the country was divided . . . set about colonizing civil society, using as their model many of the techniques of the Fascist regime. The Communists built up a powerful network of institutions alongside those of the party and its affiliated trade union, the Italian General Confederation of Work (CGIL), and together these enabled millions of their supporters to move in what amounted to a parallel universe to that of their opponents. There were organizations for ex-partisans and women (the Union of Italian Women, with 3,500 local circles and over a

> million members by 1954); the *Case del Popolo* ('Houses of the People'); the focal points (together with the Church) of community life in many smaller towns; which arranged debates and meetings; screened films, laid on children's activities and sporting events, and in some cases even ran their own pharmacies and medical services; and there were the popular *feste dell'Unità*, designed as fund-raising events for the party newspaper, with barbecues, singing, dancing and other entertainments for the whole family.[33]

As regards dire financial matters, direct funding from Moscow was not the main external source of sustainment. A steady flow of cash was guaranteed by the undeclared earnings of import–export companies that were started when the top brass of Eastern bloc countries had to place orders in the Italian market. An exemplifying case is that of Maritalia, a maritime agency based in Ravenna, which, in concert with the Soviet merchant navy, perfected a scheme of fraudulent defiscalization by declaring false expenses and evading taxes on their profit. The estimated unpaid taxes amounted to roughly one billion dollars.[34] The political evolution of the PCI paralleled that of the PSI: as soon as they entered *la stanza dei bottoni* where they could operate *le leve del potere*, their vision of democracy became a struggle for party preservation, carving up posts in public companies and administrations, where reforms were embraced only insofar as they did not threaten the penetration of the party into the social fabric. It is safe to assume that the capacity which the PCI demonstrated in local governments would have probably served areas of the South well. But even if one assumes that the PCI would not have allowed disgraceful robberies like 'the Sack of Agrigento,' culminating, on July 19, 1966, in the collapse of entire neighborhoods built on friable soil, then it is also fair to consider the party a de facto conservative force, confirmed by the fact that Communist representatives voted for 75 per cent of the bills passed by the Parliament during the years of the Center-Left coalitions; that is, from the end of 1963 (or even before, with the Fanfani Cabinet of 1962) until the political elections of 1976, with only a brief interval of Center-Right in 1973.

Had the PCI disengaged itself from the Soviet Union, instead of confirming its vote of confidence after the invasion of Hungary in 1956 and of Czechoslovakia in 1968 – not for the nonexistent threat but for the exhibited conformism – one might concur with the hopes nurtured by Crainz, Ginsborg and others. The PCI actively participated in the shaping of the *paese mancato* by helping forge the destabilizing habit of preserving jobs first and worrying about the long-term consequences later, claiming their annuity from the *politica delle mance* carried out by the *governo della non sfiducia* and the *governo di solidarietà nazionale*, where the monies labelled as 'tips' were allocated to silence local bosses, fund personal interests and barter for their votes. The

PCI never posed a direct threat in terms of acting as a field aide to facilitate Soviet military intervention or carry out a violent appropriation of the means of production and abolition of private property: the party was content with firmly placing itself as a Soviet outpost on Italian territory from a rhetorical standpoint, incorporating the internationalist rhetoric of the brotherhood of working classes in its identitarian engineering, insisting on the values of the Resistance as a national foundation, and opportunistically intercepting the emerging instances of liberation – feminist, anti-colonial, etc. – to appear always on top of the progressive agenda. The PCI distinguished itself with the reluctance of acknowledging the murders and other acts of violence perpetrated right after the end of the war by partisans and activists frustrated by the worst aspects of the Fascism–Republic continuity and the unwillingness to deal with the question of the *foibe* and the territory of Trieste out of loyalty toward the supranational confederation of Communist Parties and the 'external appointment' of Italy's international affairs entrusted to the Soviet Union. All these aspects contributed to the failure of the PCI to legitimize itself as a political force capable of overcoming the similarly divisive 'mission' of the Christian Democrats, a force with which the PCI had too much in common to not work out the mutually advantageous compromise or *compromesso storico*. Those excruciating wars of 'colonization from the inside' annihilated any residue of virtuous patriotism and brought the question of Italian identity back to square one, eventually sparking a mentality of self-segregation into municipal cultures and communities. As Christopher Duggan writes about the missing nationhood, 'the essence of Italian political life became, as it had been for so much of its history, more a struggle against an internal enemy than a pursuit of collective goals.'[35] The necessary homogenizing transition certainly could not be perfected by state institutions, always looked upon with suspicion and hostility to the point that Italian citizens have always endured a lack of faith in the State's capabilities – perceived as irredeemably bureaucratized – and a cynical skepticism for its initiatives. Appropriating John Foot's intuition on the 'permanent legitimation crisis, '*The Italian state has found legitimation extremely difficult to obtain since unification* and has never been, in any real sense, hegemonic.'[36] The inadequacy of Rome led to a centrifugal tendency still propelling the country toward identification with local, microcosmic 'bell tower' cultures and increasing frustration with central government and authorities, demonstrated today by the autonomist Northern League in the North and single-issue parties in the South, created by local officials to promote public spending and enjoy electoral refunds. Through the 1950s and 1960s, cinema recorded the embryonic stages of the territorial explosion, interpreted later as the municipalistic atomization of cultures. National synthesis of regional languages, values, and behaviors was one of the battles Italian cinema invested itself in, but at the end of the heroic phase of Neorealism, once it became clear that the teaching and

educating capability of the medium could only give short-lived and opportunistic results, cinema abandoned its messianic role. Directors – with notable exceptions like Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio Cottafavi, Vittorio De Seta and Renato Castellani – largely cast aside the didactic aspect of filmmaking and celebrated the chaos in which Italy was floundering. Reading the phenomenon in retrospect, one could say that the colorful regionalism showcasing a prismatic array of local idioms and sensitivities was the omen of today's difficult cohabitation of cultures and languages in the Italian territory, complicated by massive immigration, both internal and external. The obsessive circularity of the return to the dialect seems today the acknowledgement of a defeat – at the very basic level, of diffusion of literacy – in the task of cultural and linguistic enhancement and a retreat into the haven of micro-communities. Starting with Neorealism, the palette of dialects was hailed in the quest for national cohesiveness: today, thanks to the reactive nature of regionalism, it may not be an exaggeration to say that Italian cinema does not even try to speak to the entire population.

Resistance in the most conservative sectors of industry and in the forces most averse to social reconfiguration added up to the fragility of political action: in one instance, the excuse used by the cross-party formations contrasting the policies of the Center-Left was the nationalization of electric power, which at the time seemed the only suitable measure to meet the outstanding demand for electricity in reasonable time and at reasonable prices. If handled with the goal of complementing the prodigious growth, reforms such as the nationalization of electric power and the 1962 *Legge n. 167* would have accompanied the economic and social transformation and facilitated the transition for both entrepreneurs, who were investing at a fast pace and needed labor, and workers uprooted from their areas of origin. The amendments that were proposed but not passed in order to combat land speculation and harmonize chaotic urban development confirm the incompleteness of the reformist action and the prohibitive political climate: the dishonorable battle against the subsequent systemic action on housing development presented by Rep. Florentino Sullo of the Christian Democrats, so necessary in a time of impetuous migration and disputable trades between local governments and developers uninterested in rational urban planning, became yet another scar on the national consciousness. After the law proposed by Sullo sank in the quagmire of conflicts of interest, citizens knew that the Parliament would not be able to stop the disfiguring of their landscapes and that, in turn, ignited part of the animosity Italian people routinely harbor toward their elected representatives. Such relational codes and models of social behavior began to emerge in the early 1950s and were immediately immortalized in film in *Un eroe dei nostri tempi* (1955) by Mario Monicelli and especially in the archetypical *L'arte di arrangiarsi* (*The art of getting along*, 1954) by Luigi Zampa, with the 'camouflaging'

Alberto Sordi submissively adjusting to whichever force is in charge, 'indirectly allud[ing] to the capacity of politicians to adapt and reinvent for the different political *époques* of modern Italy'[37] but also confirming the antipolitical instinct of the Italian people, using politics essentially for their own – and their families' – advantage.

The Movie Industry After the War: Censorship and the Statute of the Filmmaker

With regard to state repression during Fascism, the approach of the censors had been cautious: The regime and directors met somewhat halfway. The former had the goal of promoting a thriving Cinecittà – with relatively few means to exercise complete control over the film industry, unlike Germany – while the latter simply tried to make the best use of their relative freedom by retreating into literary adaptations, light comedies, historical re-enactments – with very few exceptions, and often for purely financial reasons, as Giovacchino Forzano or Carmine Gallone occasionally did[38] – in what could be called a tacit complicity. After the war, the State's repressive apparatus treated cinema as yet another ideological battlefield: political factions were looking for new forms of legitimization among the ranks of writers and filmmakers, especially from the Left, while conservative legislators were trying to balance through censorship and allocations a 'domesticated' film industry without compromising artistic freedom in its entirety.

Reorganizing the production and distribution of film was considered instrumental in improving the nation's psychological welfare, and the strategies of 'redirection' were outlined by Giulio Andreotti's revision and evolution of fascist 'booster' policies, especially of Luigi Freddi's central direction and hierarchical integration of regulating bodies into state supervision. The philosophy underpinning the bill promulgated under the regime of Giulio Andreotti – actually consisting of two laws in July and December 1949 respectively, now simply called 'the Andreotti law' – is summarized by Christopher Wagstaff:

> [T]he strategy of Giulio Andreotti . . . as a cultural policy it paid lip service to quality in the *letter* of the law . . . but in its *implementation* deliberately failed to distinguish between mediocre 'reliable' films and challenging 'high quality' films.[39]

Andreotti's vision, paired with Eitel Monaco's leadership of the Associazione Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche Audiovisive (later – e Multimediali; National Association of Film, Audiovisual and Multimedia Industries) or ANICA, created an avenue for producers and entrepreneurs that ultimately proved to be decisive in reaching the most critical goal at which this postwar,

leveled sector of the economy was aiming. The goal was not only resuming the normal course of operation but creatively attracting sources and investors that would in turn revitalize interest, modernize infrastructure and establish a pattern of industrial development. One of the side effects was that some of the protagonists of this renaissance were merely unscrupulous 'soldiers of fortune' with no real managerial expertise and were simply trying to profit rapaciously from state subsidies, whether in the form of rewards or *ristorni*, the restitution of production costs. One of the funds from which money was drawn consisted of the levies American companies had to pay in order to have their films dubbed. Hundreds of film companies were started up just to enjoy such financial advantages but folded without making a single movie. However, in purely numerical terms the Andreotti law was successful in improving the ratio of American and Italian movies shown in theaters that, until the late 1950s, was basically ten to one.[40] As Barbara Corsi noted, state support was a *condicio sine qua non* for the rebirth of Italian cinema, relentlessly pursued by ANICA, which was seeking renewed prestige and status in spite of the significant leverage granted to governmental organs over issues such as censorship and ideological orientation of scripts. Noting the 'acquiescence' with which ANICA responded to the 'government blackmail,' Corsi identifies a type of 'popular and uncommitted production'[41] as an immediate result of Andreotti's power in promoting a cinematic aesthetics not at odds with the Christian Democrats' cultural models. Those models were, for the most part, gathered from official pronouncements of the Vatican, like the apostolic exhortation *Il film ideale* given by Pope Pius XII on July 1, 1955, to various representatives of the film industry, or the publication by Msgr. Luigi Civardi – a prolific writer of textbooks dealing with Catholic education and practical application of Catholic principles – *Il cinema di fronte alla morale*, published in 1940 in a series edited by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico. Through the instrument of *segnalazioni cinematografiche*, or explicit endorsements or decimations of specific pictures, the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico would serve as a powerful lobby, pronouncing judgments on works capable of reinforcing or undermining the vision of society the Holy See had in mind for Italy, its most beloved country. After appointing itself with the mandate of supervising cinema's moral message, the Vatican pinpointed the neuralgic areas of intervention, heavily blasting – among other topics – any slight or direct reference to belittled, diminished male authority; sexuality; female independence; broken-up families, etc. As the only life coach certified on Italian soil, the state-funded Catholic Church zealously got to work in fulfilling its role of a generously paid consultant. Daniela Treveri Gennari describes the tortuous paths that had to be followed to bypass censorship concerns, creating several layers of control and resulting in cultural contamination not dissimilar to a sophisticated practice of colonialism from within:

> [P]roducers approached the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico in order to gain an ecclesiastic consensus for their films, hoping therefore to pass automatically the State censorship, closely linked to the Vatican.[42]

A form of double suppression was in place, softer but ideologically consistent with other totalitarian systems, a preventative censorship prohibiting unacceptable works from being written or filmed in the first place. Producers pragmatically bowed to an insidious pressure subtler than Fascist censorship, captured by Gian Piero Brunetta:

> Fascist censorship occupied well-defined spaces and implemented a 'policy of boundaries' that could be contravened only in exceptional cases by taking advantage of small crevices in the system. Christian Democrats' censorship, thanks to its centralizing ability, triumphantly marks the most absolute policies of abuse, clientelism, blackmail, 'divide et impera' practices, and thanks to its locally decentralized forces can strike any cinematographic initiative at any moment.[43]

That elaborate strategy would touch, after the scriptwriting and marketing stages, distribution and occupation of available theaters. Parish cinemas would run only Church-approved works and subtract troublesome movies of Neorealist inspiration or those considered too lascivious or disrespectful toward Catholic teachings. Another measure was the reinforcement of widespread propaganda: prayers begging God and the Virgin to help spectators watch only Catholic-proof movies, that is, certified by the Vatican's authorities, circulated in churches and parishes until the 1960s. ANICA's pertinacious effort to secure a stable, privileged relationship with state agencies at least guaranteed a balance between the emergence of an authorial clout and development of an industrial infrastructure, whose propulsive force would last into the 1970s and end with the viral phase of the sub-genre and B-movies. Another essential aspect of the Andreotti law was the rigid structuring of the material shown in the theater, articulated in three phases: a movie, a documentary and a *cinegiornale* or newsreel. The bill had expected and unexpected consequences: if one of the goals was to undermine Neorealism, it may have had immediate effects but it did not prove far-sighted. Andreotti's template allowed a great number of beginners to learn the trade the same way Rossellini did, shaping a generation of filmmakers through the rules of the documentary, and inevitably prolonging the Neorealist season in terms of truthfulness and experimentation.[44]

One may call the program carried out by the Vatican – control over consciences – a coherent application of a Gramscian strategy of intellectual influence on culture and behaviors. The program received direct support from the Italian state, with the *Patti Lateranensi* signed by Mussolini seamlessly

embedded in the Constitution, with full support from the PCI, which had all the right to believe that a democracy is only a well-organized oligarchy. Italy was suffering another colonial wave of sorts in the form of an occupation of Cinecittà by Hollywood majors for Italy–US co-productions, which, in turn, could pass off as Italian movies and limit the quota designated for the mandatory screening of Italian works. American cultural artifacts and behaviors were appropriated in a quest for national individualization, while at the same time there was an attempt to foster a productive, nonconfrontational fusion of regional cultures and locales for an accomplished Italian hybridization. After the end of the war, during its 'soft' colonization, the United States crafted a strategy of penetration disguised as liberation, trying not to hurt workers' susceptibility and often relying on local cultural vehicles to adjust its propaganda to suitable channels and ensure maximum circulation. The guidelines drawn up by the Psychological Welfare Division were sophisticated in extolling the virtues of the American model of development and industrialization instead of simply denigrating the Soviet Union. These guidelines were also successful at organizing trips to factories on United States soil for Italian workers and aggressively employing accepted forms of cultural stratification – like storytellers – for their purposes.[45] It was a pragmatically respectful approach in which military occupation would go hand in hand with Roosevelt's 'freedom from want' and a well-crafted marketing strategy indicating America as 'the last strand of hope.' A dialectic was established between ways of life subject to Hollywoodization and feasible alternatives; between American cinema and an Italian way to mass-market and artistic productions capable of affirming a specific identity. Challenging the superiority and glamour overflowing from the American product was made even more problematic by the dubious workability of autarchical initiatives. Italian and European cinematographies in general were trapped in the apparently inescapable paradox of working toward a pronounced individualization *against* American movies while at the same time using funds coming from their commercialization. As Corsi writes, 'The few shows of strength tried for very short periods of time in France and the UK demonstrate that the business may very well die in every European country without the American product.'[46] The conquest *manu industriali* of the Italian premises was made possible by a provision of the Andreotti law, which blocked the voucher given by the Italian State to American majors for each dubbed film but allowed American producers to reinvest domestically as fresh capital part of the revenue accrued in Italy, with co-productions occupying the studios for months and months and physically preventing other works from being filmed. The pragmatism of the PCI saw this as an opportunity to reinforce its political patronage with the walk-ons who were at that time thronging around Cinecittà in their thousands, knowing that filmmakers miffed over the lack of intellectual sponsorship for their projects would eventually

reconsider and return to the fold. An example is the treatment that Palmiro Togliatti reserved for Giuseppe De Santis, who, when complaining about the open obstructionism that his masterpiece *Roma ore 11* (1952) encountered when it was distributed, was told by the Communist leader that in the future he'd better come up with some nice 'love story.' In their anti-communist paranoia, the United States and the Vatican were also able to join forces in a holy alliance against every tendency that could loosely be perceived as subversive or disruptive or that fostered socialist germs. American majors' executives would flock around representatives of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico and influential members of the Catholic Association of Film Critics to secure benign reviews and capillary distribution in the parish cinemas system. Such blocs forged a bizarre cooperation determined to promote an art devoid of polemical and 'nihilistic' stances, where Catholic reviewers and intellectuals would strive to disinter values consistent with their cultural plan; for example, praising the male-dominated Westerns as great examples of family patriarchy and in general reinscribing American escapism into the comforting narratives of the Catholic tradition:

> As genre films were a recognised form of popular and populist cinema, it is thus fair to suggest that, despite the at-the-time problematic undertone of some of the 1950s films (representation of race, or violence, for instance), they would still have been received as offering a reassuring, conventional mode of entertainment, with 'soothing resolutions.' This is not very far away from what Christian Democrats wanted to promote in their cultural ideology. They were keen on stopping national cinema from spreading doubts and liberating themes, and instead favoured proclaiming reassuring lifestyles and traditional values. This desire was in accord with the Vatican ideology.[47]

Even though the Vatican was greatly worried by the emphasis on materialism in American culture, the joint crusade aimed at providing an endless supply of American films with emphasis on stability and material affluence initiated the appropriation of such values by Italian audiences, eventually resulting in a thorough embrace of standardized American models of acquisition – in short, everything Pier Paolo Pasolini was opposed to. An argument could be made regarding the very few refusals that were issued from government offices to producers applying for state funding: on the one hand, the relative lack of controversial scripts confirms a cinema industry regulated by the Andreotti-Vatican joint venture in its mass production; on the other hand, it points to a conformist stage of intellectual life that would be broken only in the 1960s, when cultural and symbolic transformations were too overwhelming to be left out of motion pictures.

An excellent example of how filmmakers had to preventively treat their screenplays, stories and other materials can be seen in the volume *De Sica & Zavattini: Parliamo tanto di noi*, where there is a detailed chronicle of all the gratuitous and instrumental attacks that the two artists had to endure whenever one of their pictures came out. Besides well-known hostilities from Christian Democrat representatives, in that book the reader will find malevolent criticism by the Left and, in general, a perfect representation of the paranoid atmosphere in Italy, where everything had to be judged in political and ideological fashion because of the wholesale penetration of partitocracy in any critical aspect of the country.[48] Such dynamics are also described by Pierre Sorlin, who nailed the relentless way political parties used motion pictures instrumentally for electoral reasons or to gain credit as the only forces that truly captured the character of the nation. Describing the illiberal strategy carried out by Andreotti and Communist critics, Sorlin writes:

> Communist Puritanism matched that of the Catholics and Communists, like the Catholics, were longing for happy, positive endings not for ambiguous ones. Using different words, *L'Unità* could have said, like Andreotti, that there was a good and a bad realism.[49]

Both parties tried to disavow filmmakers who were deemed to be too unorthodox. However, the true problem was not only the policies in place to adopt a fully industrial cinema, but the lack of alternate means of expression and production. And, most notably, the question is why cinema in Italy had to relentlessly occupy and surrogate the place of political agency. The last nail in the coffin of Neorealism is driven by Corsi:

> It's no accident that no new figure of cinema entrepreneur came out of the Neorealist experience. It is also no accident that besides generic auspices for change, the forces of the Left were not able to concretely elaborate and put into practice a truly alternative model of production.[50]

The phenomenon of *divismo*, erratically continued under the Fascist regime thanks to the labored search for bland, noncastrating 'divas,' came to a definitive maturation with the emergence of several waves of great actors. Italy's most recognized producers also emerged in the 1950s, internationally established figures who provided a higher standard for the technical imprint and also represented Italy abroad as a dual diplomatic service. The ethics of suspicion against industrialism and its discontents plagued the debate on cinema and its ultimate role in society, with education purposes and profit at opposite poles of the debate. The pauperist utopia imbued with Benedetto Croce's idealism of art as a pure vehicle of aesthetic intuitions without the superstructure

of financial planning undermined the discussion of what strategies to adopt for a successful national cinema. Corsi, while admitting the notion of quality cinema, does not hesitate to label the notion 'paralyzing'[51] from the standpoint of economic strategies and industrial professionalization, and is joined in the discussion by Giulia Fanara. Paraphrasing an important essay by the Marxist sociologist Alberto Abruzzese, a definitive *summa* seen from the Left on the intellectual implications of Neorealism and its relations with the two main parties/ideological coalitions ruling Italian politics, Fanara highlights:

> [t]he juxtaposition between the 'cultural anonymity' of a militant in the Christian Democrats, who has on his shoulders a cultural but also functional and technical heritage, resources, awareness of media's role, power of censorship and diffuseness of popular circuits, translating into the ability to organize a 'cultural consumption', and the incapacity of the Left to articulate the politics-culture relation around the values of industrialization and presence of the working class.[52]

The attraction to the Soviet cinema of socialist realism that glorified the conquests of the working class proved to be an unrealistic and impracticable model; whereas, the ideological opposition to Hollywood notwithstanding, American cinema created a subtle inferiority complex because of its efficient division of labor, its oiled mechanisms of production and realization, and its ever-improving technological standards. The goal of combining 'high art' and the inclusion of marginalized classes in cinematic discourse accompanied the debate on the 'true' mission of Italian cinema, that of resisting aesthetic standardization and passive obedience to market demands. Corsi also stresses another ominous trait belonging to Italian cinema; namely, its incapacity to cover the virtuous distance from improvisation and 'capital coming from God knows where'[53] to procedural systematization and selection of its executive cadres. The diversification into sub-genres or *filoni* and the first high-budget productions gambling on Hollywoodization of plots and superb visual impact all point in the direction of 'a mature market'[54] where end-users seem culturally prepared to add their new level of intellectual sophistication to the business equation, sometimes with curious twists. For example, consider the case of Visconti's 'art blockbuster' *Il gattopardo* (1963), which almost made production company Titanus go bankrupt until its owner Goffredo Lombardo managed to recover his money with the parody of the original, called *I figli del leopardo* (1965) and starring Sicilian comic actors Franco Franchi and Ciccio Ingrassia. As Gianni Grimaldi fondly reminisces: 'We picked a dude that with a stovepipe could look like Burt Lancaster and the same big woman playing the slut in Visconti's movie. Franchi and Ingrassia were playing the sons of the *gattopardo* exacting revenge from the father. We used the outdoor locations

that we did not use for the original movie. Lombardo resurrected the company from the disaster with a disaster's parody.'[55]

With the *Legge n. 1213/1965*, socialist Minister Achille Corona[56] polished some controversial aspects of the *legge* Andreotti, regulating co-productions and establishing a 13 per cent state contribution calculated on box-office revenues. Corona also pushed for a distinct character of 'Italianicity,' implementing binding requirements about the nationality of directors, technicians, actors and scriptwriters. Given that Neorealism was propelled by a vacuum in the legislation and the explosion of Italian cinema was made possible by Andreotti, it seems paradoxical that one of the representatives of that *riformismo possibile* hoped for by Crainz and other scholars would stifle the unorganized creativity of Italian cinema by tightening up the system of state support and introducing the infamous article 28 on the 'cinema of research' and hard-to-distribute pictures. One may argue that there is similar 'elitist' legislation elsewhere in Europe that sculpts the role of the filmmaker as an autonomous creator, but cases in point, like that of France, are extremely pragmatic, for example, when dealing with marketing and distribution. Thus, without supplementary provisions, article 28 basically resulted in an application of Croce's ideas on art as expression and intuition, with all the emphasis fideistically shifted toward the demiurgic auteur, as if technical and organizational aspects were afterthoughts crippling the work of art with their useless superstructural ballast. At the beginning of its application, promising filmmakers managed to find a niche for themselves in the 'crevices' of the legislation and have their projects approved. However, once the movie industry began to shrink and quality to deteriorate, article 28 became a byword for presumptuousness and unintentional comedy. The advent of television would then push the works made through article 28 – and the quasi totality of Italian cinematography, for that matter – toward a generalizing, low-budget model, where cinema copies television and producers hope that the audience, already accustomed to the soporific litany of television images, would enthusiastically accept spending two hours in a movie theater being comforted by the same type of language. The decadence of the entertainment circuit, in spite of accessible funding, reinforced the hostility toward a system of heavy intervention, possibly suggesting that tax sheltering may, in fact, attract more resources and ensure a less disharmonious development. Carlo Lizzani, a proven anti-fascist who has always been careful to give an honest picture of fascist cinema and culture,[57] a system of which he had first-hand knowledge, criticized in a recent interview the heritage of the attitude of suspicion toward the industrial paradigm. After stressing the financial support Fascism granted to artists and culture in general, and after reminiscing about the failures of the Chinese Revolution, carried out by peasants – 'the most conservative class in every society' – Lizzani answers the interviewer on why Italian cinema is more than anything a cinema of *autori*:

> Because it's not an industry. If there were a strong industrial structure like in the U.S., then there would be the 'director' in charge in Hollywood instead of the 'auteur' that dominates in Europe. Luckily, with the new popularity of fiction *[a fiction in Italy is a film made for television, usually in two or more episodes]*, we are witnessing the birth of such a technician with artistic features. *La meglio gioventù* by Marco Tullio Giordana is the most accomplished example.[58]

Even though the auteur–director argument is a dichotomy that dates back to the 1960s, Lizzani once again demonstrates his nose for structural developments in the industry, understanding that the old ritual of popular cinema with its genres and audiences has been replaced by TV serials or, as they are called in Italy, 'fictions.' Lizzani – who can be considered the critical consciousness of Italian cinema – was also quick to dismantle the equations Neorealism = amateurish production (whose consequence was the other equation, industry = lack of artistic quality) and to understand that heavy state subsidies would have been a false and temporary solution to systemic problems. Together with the luminous protagonists of those extraordinary years, he proved more enlightened than his political counterpart.

A comment on the exhaustion of Neorealism's heroic phase is appropriate here. As hard as it is to give credit to the 'murder' theory – a murder with the fingerprints of American majors, Christian Democrats and the Vatican all over it – it is also safe to say that Neorealism's demise has many accomplices. One of the merits of Neorealism was its mission to deliver the transformational energy of human suffering to everybody, showing characters, landscapes and lives that were not reassuring but destabilizing and, as many filmmakers attest was often their intention, vehicles of knowledge bound to educate people. The distressed plea to the Italian people for justice and freedom echoing from Ricci in *Ladri di biciclette* or from the partisans in the North-East episode of *Pais*à speaks of a clear ethical stance, pondered for years under Fascism, aimed at the discovery of the putatively authentic national spirit. In the Italian wasteland, those voices and 'tears of things,' as Mira Liehm and Gian Piero Brunetta called them in their histories of Italian cinema, seemed to offer a radical alternative, even capable of undermining the process of capitalist restoration. The mission was a suicidal one, especially when legislation all but 'established a level of governmental control tantamount to censorship'[59] resembling the same compromise sponsored by the Fascist regime, annihilating free speech and pushing directors to more acceptable genres. It is possible to see such tension in the words of militant literary critic Carlo Salinari, who blames state capitalism for the decadence of Neorealism and Italian art in general:

> The crisis of neorealism was rooted in an objective general fact: in the involution of the Italian society or, if we wish to use another expression, in the restoration of capitalism in Italy. It affected the arts in different ways. Film received a direct, massive, and brutal blow. The state used its entire political power and took advantage of the dependence of film on the industrial structure. All kind of administrative measures were used to disrupt a further evolution of neorealism. The blow aimed at the cinema had a far-reaching effect.[60]

It is unclear, though, what type of society would guarantee acceptable standards of life to complement 'high art,' which seems to go in the direction of a constructivist rationalism stemming from Croce's aesthetics and seamlessly engrafting Marxist ideology onto idealistic culture, with that mention of Neorealism's 'further evolution' as a messianic projection of a Benjaminian society in which politics and art march at the same pace. One also has to take into account the initial attempts of the PCI to include works in its cultural pantheon when not explicitly joining forces in the crusade of preventative censorship. Another fascinating take on Neorealism's failure as a destabilizing agent of change is Vincent Rocchio's *Cinema of Anxiety*, a fundamental endeavor that sought to lay bare the nonrevolutionary conventionalities of Neorealist cinema. In Rocchio's words:

> The problem for contemporary American society, though, is that no other kind of social model has found wide acceptance as a viable replacement for reverence and obedience to authority. In this respect, there are very strong parallels between contemporary American culture and postwar Italian culture. The critical difference between the two is that for postwar Italian culture there were other visible models competing with patriarchal capitalism: the cooperation and unity of the Resistance became the most hallowed example. Despite the dissolution of its government and the resulting social upheaval, postwar Italy did not become a revolutionary society. Patriarchal capitalism, while battered, nonetheless maintained itself, with not a little help from American intervention in the economic and political life of postwar Italy. Bold economic and political acts do not occur in a vacuum, however; Gramsci's concept of hegemony demonstrates that they operate through and with ideological discourse.[61]

This passage, worthy of being quoted in its entirety, echoes John Hess's condemnation of the lack of political fervor in Neorealism[62] and Frank P. Tomasulo's reading of *Ladri di biciclette* as 'no less than a Hollywood film, [a film that] sutures its viewers into an ideological mind-screen of received wisdom.'[63] Rocchio seems to imply that democracy does not do well enough

for a country trying to rebuild after a dictatorship. If one can agree with Rocchio about the seemingly inevitable turn that political events had to take in Italy under American pressure, choosing capitalist accumulation as opposed to *sovkhoz*, five-year plans, and other forms of revolutionary economy, many problems nevertheless arise when one seeks to understand the intimate nature of those 'bold economic and political acts' that to Rocchio's dismay did not take place in Italy. Neorealism's death was conveniently accelerated, but it was already under attack from too many fronts and it is unrealistic to think that the original neorealist template could work as the backbone of a movie industry. Finally, concerning the 'cooperation and unity' of the Resistance, aside from all geopolitical questions, it is not clear what Italy should or could have become because Rocchio does not mention in his book Pietro Calamandrei's doctrine of 'cooperazione e unità,' unless he is simply trying to pinpoint the homologies between what in his opinion is a reactionary political turn – the electoral loss of the Popular Front in 1948 – and similarly reactionary art, Neorealism. With only a minor semantic slippage, one could rest assured that the collectivist slogan of 'cooperation and unity' may, as we in fact have seen, be chosen to illustrate postwar economy through the use of cooperatives, with the Christian Democracy resolute to not leave too much maneuverable space to its left and a substantial co-participation by the other mass parties, which had no options of radical discontinuity in mind. Cooperatives were only one of the means through which DC and PCI obtained major fiscal and financial assistance: they implemented sophisticated systems of 'ballot-swapping' and enlarged their sphere of influence occupying vast sectors of the Italian economy.

Notes

1. Lorenzo Cuccu, *Il cinema di Paolo e Vittorio Taviani: Natura, cultura, storia nei film dei due registi toscani* (Rome: Gremese, 2001), 15. The scholar points out that this declining 'Subject' is a representative of the bourgeois class more than an up-and-coming revolutionary hero.
2. Fabrizio Barca, 'Compromesso senza riforme nel capitalismo italiano,' in Barca (ed.), *Storia del capitalismo italiano dal dopoguerra a oggi* (Rome: Donzelli, 1997), 3–115.
3. Established in 1933 as a prop for failing Italian banks and originally conceived as 'an instrument for the furtherance of the industrial policy of the Fascist state,' the state-owned holding company grew over the years to encompass more than 1,000 businesses, employ more than 500,000 people, and produce everything from highways to telephone equipment to ice cream. Credited with spurring the phenomenal growth of the Italian economy that occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the IRI worked well until it came to function mostly as a facilitator capable of attracting private capital.
4. Glauco Della Porta, 'Planning and growth under a mixed economy: The Italian experience,' in Jan S. Prybyla (ed.), *Comparative Economic Systems* (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1969), 192.

5. Fabrizio Barca and Sandro Trento, 'La parabola delle partecipazioni statali: Una missione tradita,' in Barca, *Storia del capitalismo italiano dal dopoguerra ad oggi*, 216.
6. Tobias Jones, *The Dark Heart of Italy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), 213.
7. Lino Micciché, *Cinema italiano: Gli anni 60 e oltre* (Venice: Marsilio, 1995), 99.
8. 'Cuccagna' in Italian is a controversial word: It denotes a fabulous experience, and it often carries a sarcastic connotation. In Salce's movie, it is an ironic commentary on the 'wonderland' of the economic boom.
9. Guido Crainz, *Il paese mancato: Dal miracolo economico agli anni ottanta* (Rome: Donzelli, 2003).
10. Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943–1988* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 162.
11. Indro Montanelli and Mario Cervi, *Storia d'Italia*, Vol. X (Milan: RCS, 1999), 203.
12. Piero Craveri, *La Repubblica dal 1958 al 1992* (Turin: UTET, 1995), 311.
13. Paolo Farnetti, 'Partiti e sistema di potere,' in Valerio Castronovo (ed.), *L'Italia contemporanea 1945–1975* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), 77.
14. Raffaele Romanelli, 'Stato, burocrazia e modo di governo,' in Castronovo, *L'Italia contemporanea*, 149.
15. On the substantial continuity of the *prefetti* with the Fascist regime and the failed reform of the administration, see also Fabrizio Barca, 'Compromesso senza riforme nel capitalismo italiano,' in Fabrizio Barca (ed.), *Storia del capitalismo italiano dal dopoguerra a oggi* (Rome: Donzelli, 1997), 24–5. Barca argues that two alternative models of reform for administrative justice were rapidly dismissed, the 'American' one emphasizing federal autonomy and the 'council' one in liberated areas based on people's decisions 'from below.'
16. Crainz, *Il paese mancato*, 110.
17. '[T]his type of simplifications, these escapes into stereotypes . . . are part of a defensive process, typical for a historical moment in which the identitarian image seemed even more complex and elusive as opposed to the past.' Mariapia Comand, *Commedia all'italiana* (Milan: Il Castoro, 2010), 41. See also Silvana Patriarca. *Italianità. La costruzione del carattere nazionale* (Bari: Laterza, 2010).
18. On the interconnectedness of North and South, as well as crime and capital, see Nelson Moe, 'Modernity, mafia style: Alberto Lattuada's *Il Mafioso* [sic],' in Dana Renga (ed.), *Mafia Movies: A Reader* (University of Toronto Press, 2011), 219–25.
19. Rémi Fournier Lanzoni, *Comedy Italian Style: The Golden Age of Italian Film Comedies* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 97.
20. John J. Michalczyk, *The Italian Political Filmmakers* (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), 29.
21. Mariano Marchetti, *Il futuro dimenticato: L'economia italiana dalla metà degli anni '60 ad oggi* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2006).
22. Stefano Pivato, *Il miracolo scippato* (Rome: Donzelli, 2011).
23. Luigi Barzini, *The Italians: A Full-length Portrait Featuring their Manners and Morals* (New York: Touchstone, 1964), 208.
24. Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy Since 1796* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 534.
25. John Foot, *Modern Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 55. The quote, in the chapter called 'The State,' is from a paragraph entitled 'A Permanent Legitimation Crisis?'
26. Marcello Flores and Nicola Gallerano, *Sul PCI: Un'interpretazione storica* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992), 243.
27. Valerio Castronovo, 'Economia e classi social,' in Castronovo, *L'Italia contemporanea*, 26.

28. Nicola Tranfaglia and Massimo Firpo (ed.), *I grandi problemi dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea*, Vol. V (Milan: Garzanti, 2003), 88.
29. That is the definition used by a former manager of the *Lega delle cooperative*, Ivan Cicconi. See his *La storia del futuro di Tangentopoli* (Rome: Dei, 1988).
30. Both speeches by Cossutta and Iotti are quoted in Crainz, *Il paese mancato*, 497.
31. Ibid. 497.
32. This cartel was an outstanding achievement that had to be properly celebrated by further feasting on Italy's public finances: From 1976 to 1979 the *governo della non sfiducia* and *governo di solidarietà nazionale* staged a trial period for a future merger, which happened in 2007 with the birth of the Partito Democratico – the sum of the post-Communist Democratici di Sinistra and the Christian Democrats who were not allied with Berlusconi.
33. Duggan, *The Force of Destiny,* 549–50.
34. On the financing mechanisms of the PCI, see Salvatore Sechi, *Compagno cittadino: Il PCI tra via parlamentare e lotta armata* (Cosenza: Rubbettino, 2006), 446 and 479.
35. Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 543.
36. Foot, *Modern Italy*, 55.
37. Lanzoni, *Comedy Italian Style*, 25.
38. In *Cinema e Fascismo* by Vito Zagarrio, the author conducts an interview with Alessandro Blasetti, stressing the 'encouragement' by the regime of filmmaking, the fact that Fascism did not use cinema as a political weapon, and that the 'adherence to reality' theorized since the 1930s, together with the tragic experience of the war, would later generate the cinema of Visconti and Rossellini. See Vito Zagarrio, *Cinema e Fascismo: Film, modelli, immaginari* (Venice: Marsilio, 2004).
39. Christopher Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema: An Aesthetic Approach* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 13.
40. Libero Bizzarri and Libero Solaroli, *L'industria cinematografica italiana* (Firenze: Parenti, 1958).
41. Barbara Corsi, *Con qualche dollaro in meno: Storia economica del cinema italiano* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 2001), 41.
42. Daniela Treveri Gennari. *Post-War Italian Cinema: American Intervention, Vatican Interests* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 28.
43. Gian Piero Brunetta, *Il cinema neorealista italiano: Storia economica, politica e culturale* (Rome: Laterza, 2009), 77. For the role of Andreotti in backing the Vatican's *desiderata* with the politicized, arbitrary abuse mentioned by Brunetta, see Treveri Gennari, *Post-War Italian Cinema*, especially 72–88.
44. See also the memories of Florestano Vancini, in Valeria Napolitano, *Florestano Vancini: Intervista a un maestro del cinema* (Naples: Liguori, 2008), 8–9.
45. The complex process of Americanization that started with the prosperity vow made by the Marshall Plan is analyzed in the miscellaneous volume *Identità italiana e identità europea nel cinema italiano dal 1945 al miracolo economico*, ed. Gian Piero Brunetta (Turin: Edizioni della Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1996).
46. Corsi, *Con qualche dollaro in meno*, 87–8.
47. Treveri Gennari, *Post-War Italian Cinema*, 95.
48. Another detailed account of this situation, not only relating to De Sica and Zavattini but also De Santis, Fellini, Visconti, and others, is in Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance: Film in Italy from 1942 to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 92–5 and 105–6. On page 94, Liehm observes that 'Marxism had offered the only consistent antifascist ideology during the twenty years of fascism,' and 'it should not be forgotten that a centuries-old Catholic

tradition has accustomed the Italians to the translation of most problems, including those of art and culture, into ideological terms.'

49. Pierre Sorlin, *Italian National Cinema, 1896–1996* (London: Routledge, 1996), 90.
50. Corsi, *Con qualche dollaro in meno*, 57.
51. Ibid. 55.
52. Giulia Fanara, *Pensare il Neorealismo: Percorsi attraverso il neorealismo cinematografico italiano* (Rome: Lithos, 2000), 209.
53. Corsi, *Con qualche dollaro in meno*, 62.
54. Ibid. 63.
55. Gianni Grimaldi, *Platea Estate 89*, now in Marco Giusti, *Dizionario dei film italiani stracult* (Rome: Frassinelli, 2004), 315.
56. On the troubled gestation of the *legge* Corona, see Fabio Francione, *Claudio Zanchi: Un riformista per il cinema* (Alessandria: Falsopiano, 2003).
57. Lizzani was one of the 'witnesses' against Mussolini during one of the 'History Trials' or *processi alla storia* that are regularly held every summer in San Mauro Pascoli. He was very determined, though, to confirm that Italy owes its national cinema to Fascism.
58. Carlo Lizzani, 'Ma il fascismo non tagliava sulla cultura,' *La Stampa*, June 12, 2010, 36.
59. Pauline Small, *Sophia Loren: Moulding the Star* (Chicago: Intellect Books, University of Chicago Press, 2009), 18.
60. Quoted in Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance: Film in Italy from 1942 to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 101.
61. Vincent F. Rocchio, *Cinema of Anxiety: A Psychoanalysis of Italian Neorealism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 6–7.
62. John Hess, 'Neorealism and New Latin American Cinema: *Bicycle Thieves* and *Blood of the Condor*,' in John King, Ana M. Lopez, and Manuel Alvarado (ed.), *Mediating Two Worlds: Cinematic Encounters in the Americas* (London: BFI Publishing, 1993), 104–18.
63. Frank P. Tomasulo, 'Bicycle Thieves: A Re-Reading,' in Howard Curle and Stephen Snyder (ed.) *Vittorio De Sica: Contemporary Perspectives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 160. (The quote is from a comment made by the editors.)

2. THE NEW WAVE PROPER/ITALIAN STYLE DEBATE AND THE EXPLOSION OF NATIONAL CINEMAS

The Italian film industry enjoyed unprecedented growth at the beginning of the 1960s, resulting in a sensational increase in production figures and a stunning rise in export and domestic revenues. This positive trend was accompanied by a considerable number of aspiring cineastes starting their careers with instant classics, a phenomenon about which Gian Piero Brunetta wrote: 'There is no other country in the world where one can witness, both quantitatively and qualitatively, a similar blossoming of new talents in such a concentrated amount of time.'[1] Despite the high number of impressive *opere prime*, the new authors did not gel as a canonical school, a movement, or a new wave proper, and the dialogue with emerging cinematographies was carried out on an individual basis and through a double movement of appropriation and contamination. A Francophile like Antonio Pietrangeli looked at François Truffaut for his cinema of feelings, while Michelangelo Antonioni's 'resistance to emotions,' as Robert Bresson described Antonioni's method, was mediated by Alain Resnais in his patterns of hesitation. On a broader level, the demystification of urban landscapes dating back to *Ladri di biciclette* became a constitutive element of motion pictures internationally and was adopted as an aesthetic principle by filmmakers such as Eric Rohmer and Louis Malle. The historical explicitness inherited from Neorealism could easily be translated into other cinematographies undergoing similar periods of crisis and pressed to give voice to new urgencies. Rossellini's method – interiorization of time, rejection of 'logically' interlocked scenes, improvisation as an ethical stance, the need of 'penetrating into the present while it is moving'[2] – and realist

aesthetics were almost seamlessly installed by emerging cinematographies during the rise of national cinemas, possibly only with the exception of Brazil, where cineastes had to invest the medium with a strong symbolic mandate in order to fulfill their agenda of decolonization. As in many emerging world cinemas, in Italy, directors pursued an 'identity image' connoted by a high premium on authenticity and the affiliation to a demythologized national tradition. Paraphrasing Millicent Marcus's Neorealism-centered position, Italy's new cinema 'is something that really happened,'[3] with a smooth transition from Neorealism to a late modernist phase where socio-historical specificities are gradually abandoned in favor of portraits of general alienation from any environment. The Neorealist rupture was so radical that it is unthinkable that such a revolution could be easily filed away and disposed of. The philosophical novelty of an image that turns into a receptive network of relations and meanings was there to stay, as well as other structuring principles such as that which Christopher Wagstaff has described as the 'depiction of an "absence," in which the viewer has at first to furnish his or her own hypothesis (because a hypothesized "presence" is only gradually established).'[4] Neorealism was a type of realism that is not literary, that rejected naturalist theatricality and that was already born modernist, so the stylistic contamination persisted until the late 1960s, if not longer, complicating the elaboration of an Italian 'new cinema.'

Hypothesizing continuity in Italian cinema under the loose aegis of a realist–modernist canon is different than reading the history of Italian film in the light of Neorealism. Even though Marcus acknowledges Neorealism's loose character and the different aesthetic agendas of its members, the scholar connects the 'cohesive' poetics of Neorealism to further developments in Italian film, ranging from what she calls the 'consumable realism' of the *Pane e amore* series, to Scola's melancholy homage of *C'eravamo tanto amati* (1974). Marcus is very careful in not giving mandatory properties to the formal devices employed by the canonized Neorealist directors, as well as to the break with prewar cinematic practices, at the same time stressing that 'Italian film industry had always paid obeisance to the realist possibilities implicit in the medium.'[5] The scholar wants to confer to Neorealism the privileged status of a moral touchstone, contradictorily feeding itself off a mythical aura constructed by celebratory bibliography. The provocative thesis of *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism* is that it

> constitutes *la via maestra* of Italian film, that it is the point of departure for all serious postwar cinematic practice, and that each director had to come to terms with it in some way, whether in seeming imitation (the early Olmi), in commercial exploitation (the middle Comencini), or in ostensible rejection (the recent Tavianis).[6]

One of the dangers of this approach is to turn Neorealism into a semiotic play, retrospectively isolating those works that somehow resembled the stylistics canonically associated with the movement, considering a film noteworthy only when it could somehow be ascribed to an *a priori* realistic nature of Italian cinema, and eternally suspending it in a neorealist totality:

> The sporadic outbursts of recurring waves of so-called neo-Neorealism, to which another neo- can be added at will (*I compagni*, *Accattone*, and *Banditi a Orgosolo*) are only the most obvious examples of a cinematic memory that will not disappear, and that dictates, if not the outward form of the modern film industry, at least its conscience.[7]

By following the developmental lines of aesthetic principles established by Neorealism and determining how they were reconfigured for the new Zeitgeist, it is thinkable to go beyond Neorealism (other than a Neorealism short-circuit), disengaging oneself from those ideas in the media and academia that vulgarize every conspicuous attempt undertaken by Italian cinema as neorealist imitation bound to recapture the magic from the good old days.

The type of cinema Italy was producing, aesthetically more polarized, predominantly modernist in its aesthetics and radical in its often uncompromising commentary on the country's status quo can be loosely superimposed with the periodization proposed by András Bálint Kovács. The scholar establishes a subsequent modernist phase after the early-century avant-gardes, coinciding with a strong 'aesthetic reflection on and a critique of its own traditional forms'[8] then culminating in the more politically oriented films of the late 1960s. Carefully placing postwar Italian cinema under the domain of Gilles Deleuze's time-image and borrowing from Bálint Kovács' definition of late modernist cinema as an art hinged on the three main tenets of abstraction, reflexivity and subjectivity, it is conceivable to subsume Neorealism into a larger movement that can be called the anomalous Italian wave. This tendency will be characterized by a deterritorialization of cinematic spaces achieved through Zavattinian devices of wandering and shadowing, generating a template of alienated indeterminacy. The structuring principle of individualization is also present in many films, provoked by the constant struggle to define Italian identity and 'mission' in the modern, industrialized, westernized world. In this long stretch, realism and modernism reverberate into each other, with, at the inception, the revolutionary and purifying movement of realism already 'contaminated' by the reflexive and disenchanted ethos of modernity. Noa Steimatsky writes:

> The neorealist turn to earlier realist traditions – cinematographic and more broadly art historical or literary, Italian and imported – was then undertaken in implicit critique of Fascist rhetoric and its rural ideology.

> But it might have also been a response to Fascist culture's attempts – in part successful – for the domestication of modernism and the taming of the avant-gardes.[9]

It is an oppositional realism, reacting against Fascism's ransacking of popular myths and Hollywood's fraudulent template, a sensory-motor schema which culminates in an aesthetic illusion of harmony and continuity whose questionable truthfulness will be supplanted by other realisms and unmediated modes of representation. It is a brand of realism – Jurij Lotman's criticism comes to mind – requesting extensive knowledge of the medium in order to appreciate the effort of destroying conventionalities and ideological constructions. The movement is loose and amorphous enough to allow major transitions and fluctuations from traditional narrative structures to *nouveau roman* techniques, with different treatments of the landscape and political commitment shifting from indifference to engagement, taking on the early Neorealist intuition of a spurious alloy of genres and rhythms and rarefying its historical material, transfiguring the Resistance into the failure of its values for the reconstitution of the nation. Features such as the malleability of space, represented as plagued by ambivalences, the pliability of time, and the movement toward an unsettling present teeming with uncertain identities are introduced. Antonio Pietrangeli, one of the filmmakers presented here, is a case in point. Pietrangeli was a flaming advocate of Neorealism even before its official birth, but works like *Io la conoscevo bene* (1965) show an elaborate strategy that reconfigures the Neorealist aesthetics altogether, valorizing an elliptical mental cinema aesthetically adjoining the French Nouvelle Vague. While positioning his characters in flexible landscapes and abandoning some of the protagonists as the film goes on, Pietrangeli seems to have captured the essence of the Neorealist reform, the 'figures' of time, the sense of disruption, the narrative destabilized by digression, the emptiness of actions aimed at permanently modifying a state of being.

When mapping the new waves of the late 1950s and the 1960s, the array of opinions about Italy presents an array of postures, like the dismissive and resolute position of Geoffrey Nowell-Smith who said: 'Whatever else the new cinema achieved in Italy, it did not produce a Nouvelle Vague.'[10] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson's individualization of a stylistic heritage presents another viewpoint that connects Neorealism to the modernist phase represented by Antonioni, Fellini and Visconti. Finally, there is recognition of different artistic trajectories coalescing around a certain trend, loosely defined as a sui generis Italian Nouvelle Vague. An advocate of the latter view was Lino Micciché, who categorized Neorealism as the most precocious new wave and then underscored the emergence of a new cinema as a natural outcome given the economic resources the industry was enjoying at the time.[11] Gian

Piero Brunetta, who mentioned Franco Brusati and Elio Petri as representatives of an artificial 'Italian style' new wave,[12] enlisted a conspicuous number of filmmakers for a chapter on the *Nouvelle Vague Italiana*,[13] an extremely heterogeneous group comprised of all the canonized Italian auteurs who had begun their careers by the late 1950s/early 1960s who, nonetheless, shared

> [e]nvisioning themselves as 'owners' of their own movies, refusing the exclusive tyranny of the market, and obviously sharing a number of recurring thematic and stylistic similarities, such as the breaking of linear narration and the refusal of classical editing as a norm.[14]

When applied to Italy, the 'new wave' label often enjoys the same uncertainty as the Neorealist one. The very protagonists of that season are reluctant to use the trope even as an open and plural category. While American label NoShame triumphantly launched the DVD of Bernardo Bertolucci's *Partner* (1968) together with 'Edoardo Bruno's long lost Italian Nouvelle Vague feature film *La sua giornata di gloria*' (1969), the same long forgotten 'masterpiece' was sardonically included by Marco Bellocchio in a retrospective entitled '1968: Ha ballato una sola estate' aimed at deconstructing the vague desires and the fanciful, foolish ambitions of artistic and social renovation floundering in Italy's youth movement and 'third-hand' (as defined by Carmelo Bene) turmoils of 1968.

Master Narratives for Italian Cinema

To attempt a different, albeit loose, homogenization of the years at issue by outlining the contours of an anomalous Italian new wave and establishing Neorealism as its catalyst, the first task is to highlight the germs of modernism[15] – collisional stance against established moral orders, psychologically unsettling nature of modernization, all under the umbrella of directors/creators looking at their *opera* as comprehensive vehicles of ideas – that will come to fruition with the successive generation of filmmakers. Thus, after the deconstructive sounding of the intricacies of the Neorealist discourse and the exposing of the problematic nature and use of the trope, and the extrapolation of the modernist sensibility resulting in a dialectic, residual realism, it is reasonable to look at the arch that goes from the canonized Neorealist auteurs to the avant-garde, psychedelic, and labyrinthine *non sequitur* of late 1960s works by Tinto Brass, Bernardo Bertolucci, Elio Petri, and Romano Scavolini as well as many experimental filmmakers. Then, in the 1970s, when both the realist and the modernist veins were exhausted, and a depressing season of 'umbilical' vignettes, postmodern sketches, and other mannerist works – often trying to emulate the bland aesthetics of television – are ushered

in, the fracture becomes as clear as the white telephones-Neorealism divide. The project of periodizing Italian film anew by inscribing the 1950s and the 1960s in the general emergence of national cinemas through a sui generis new wave sparked by a new concept of the image appearing for the first time with Neorealism will serve two purposes. One is to include in the discussion recently (re)discovered films whose importance is somehow understood but which are sacrificed critically as derivative works; the other is to offer a different but not oppositional line of interpretation to the already existing master narratives of Italian cinema. Such narratives include among others the exclusive reading of Italian film in the light of Neorealism (Marcus); seeing a fundamental influence of Pirandello's concept of humor as a strategy of subversion in all of Italy's most vital achievements (Manuela Gieri); arranging the entire history of the country's cinema in the three major moments of realism, modernism, and postmodernism (Jameson); or expanding on Italian film's capacity for monitoring sociological changes (Brunetta). One of the most stimulating hypotheses that has been the foundation for recent works on Italian cinema, proposed by Marcia Landy's *Italian Film*, is the idea of its function in the formation or problematic negotiation of a national identity. Expanding on the concepts of collective narratives offering the illusion of unity and cohesiveness, and the perception/misperception of what is considered to be typically Italian, the scholar writes:

> The Italian cinema reveals itself as engaged in a social fiction but a necessary one, relying on a narrative that perpetuates itself in terms of 'the people'. The national community is forged through the assumed common bonds of unitary language, the nation as a family, conceptions of gender and ethnicity that rely on an identity of 'origins, culture, and interests', and geographical (and sacrosanct) borders.[16]

Also noteworthy is the accurate overview of Gramscian motifs in later works by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, Pasolini, Bertolucci, Monicelli, and Ermanno Olmi. According to Landy, directors implement in good faith the Gramscian principle of Southern populations as governed by their common sense and therefore incapable of cultural emancipation. Thus, the impression is always of an unresolved acceptance of the present, where a passatist critique overwhelms the sharp observations on change, cultural fossilization, and modernization one can find in *Il cammino della speranza* (1950), *Ladri di biciclette*, or *Riso amaro* (1949).[17] Franco Fortini's *a posteriori* definition of Neorealism as 'neopopulism' as opposed to Lukácsian realism comes to mind, and reminds us of the reductionist tendency in the critique of Neorealism that blames it as a failure for hypothetical revolutionary shortcomings[18] like a phony messiah incapable of indicating a suitable model of economic and intellectual growth

for Italian society. It is true, though, that the relationship between society and intellectuals saw Neorealist filmmakers in a somehow backward and regressive position, for they chose rurality instead of industrialization and urbanization, as well as 'the man–nature relationship rather than the man–society one.'[19] A significant part of the scholarship concerning Neorealism has dealt with it as a catalog of reactive devices and has brushed off its contribution to the evolution of the image, focusing instead on its alleged ideological shortcomings:

> The struggle against capitalism is translated into an ideological rejection of its social and productive organization, coinciding with – this is the criticism of the '70s against neorealism – the rejection of the reality of the factory, the market and processes of massification, and the recovering of the uncontaminated, the simple, the nonindustrial, thus running the risk of inserting into the Salveminian tradition of the South – the countryside, the South of Italy, underdevelopment forces that could be combined only with an 'alliance' – that which was a real fact, the rural nature of the Italian economy of the time.[20]

Those who shared this approach deconstructed Neorealism as a cohesive stance but ultimately ended up in a theoretical cul-de-sac, isolating the phenomenon as a formidable, miraculous season sealed by Fascism and the consumerist age. By the same token, there was also a journalistic tendency for which Neorealism became a reconciled simulacrum of a nostalgic, pre-industrial past of an ambiguously pacified nation and the 'great Italian hope' against serial entertainment. It is a tendency that resurfaces periodically, for instance, every time an Italian movie doing well at festivals or praised by 'the Americans' has morphological resemblance with the Neorealist profilmic.

Landy's most intriguing point is her emphasis on the disruption of the movement-image, the true innovation of Neorealism: fragmentation, multiplication, 'disjunctions between landscape and character,'[21] the category of 'openness' and broken causality are explored in order to redefine conventions and establish a different relation to the world. It is the birth of conceptual realism, where auterist cinema privileges its own preferred formal device or philosophical stance taken from the broad category of 'realism':

> Rethinking neorealism from the vantage point of the time-image releases the film critic from the dreary round of having to first establish the precise moment of neorealism's beginning as well as marking its absolute limits and absolute distinctions . . . Neorealism . . . was, foremost, a harbinger of the attention that must be paid to the visual image in a world that had been set in motion by the powers of the visual and their relation to the dynamism of time, motion and change.[22]

This way, Neorealism almost equates with every challenge against genre cinema and in general against every wave of returning movement-image, in a natural alliance with 'serious,' 'quality' works against the huge receptacles of *pepla*, spaghetti westerns, Italian-style comedies, and the rest of the genre cinema. Landy here reconnects with one of the most interesting observations on Neorealism, made by Brunello Rondi, who tried to inform the movement with a solid philosophical foundation, proposing the idea of Neorealism as 'cinema of duration' and of 'analytical time' overcoming the juxtaposition of observer and object in a fluid representation of reality, where the indistinct and hypnotic rhythm of things can supposedly help us penetrate the ideological layers superimposed on people, create knowledge, and through that revelation improve human solidarity and the social tissue, in a virtuous circle that would in turn spark the desire for further knowledge and personal as well as collective enlightenment.

Landy has adopted Deleuze's categorization not only of Rossellini, Visconti and De Sica but also of Fellini and Antonioni as filmmakers who have abandoned the schematics of the 'logical joints' so abhorred by Rossellini and embraced a worldview where encounters are synonymous with failure and reality can hardly be scratched by the characters' actions. Also, Alessia Ricciardi, albeit critical of Deleuze's 'fatalism' and 'ethical sobriety,' acknowledged that

> [t]he advantage of Deleuze's critical approach is that, thanks to the pervasive application of his category of the time-image, the genealogy of post-World War II Italian cinema can look like an organic continuum that encompasses early Rossellini, De Sica, Visconti, Antonioni and Fellini.[23]

It is a continuum that can comfortably be stretched until the late 1960s. Insisting on the epistemologic deficit that the new image is fraught with, Jaimey Fisher writes:

> In the time-image . . . links between part and whole become 'serial' rather than organic; they grow dispersive and are difficult to comprehend. In this newly uncertain and unpredictable cinematic situation, the characters are left struggling to read and comprehend the image rather than merely absorbing it and reacting to it.[24]

Emiliano Morreale contributes to the debate by extrapolating germs of renewal from Neorealist and post-Neorealist filmmakers. While Alberto Lattuada's *I dolci inganni* (1960) and Carlo Lizzani's *La vita agra* (1964) are mentioned for

broken narratives and subjective notations, it is with Antonioni, Pasolini, and Fellini that Italian film achieves full modernist maturity in Deleuzian terms, with

> the combination of metalinguistic commitment and the reproductive aspect of cinema, or the new relationship with characters, aimlessly gliding through different situations, whereby for spectators the authors become the guarantee of identification more than the protagonists.[25]

Ricciardi and Rancière, among others, have critiqued Deleuze's application of failed sensory-motor schema to the early Rossellini – episodes from *Roma città aperta* (1946) (the death of Magnani) and *Germania anno zero* (1948) (the boy stealing money from a mature lady) go in the opposite direction – as well as his unwillingness to include the ethos of the Resistance in his theoretical system. One may add, without determining a direct filiation, that Deleuze's remarks apply to the 'passiveness' of that which comes after *Caccia tragica* (1947), *Roma città aperta*, and *Paisà* because the values of the Resistance are quickly forgotten and it becomes unclear what the foundation pact is that is holding the nation together. I would not go as far as Fisher in posing a homology between the presence of children in movies such as *Germania anno zero* and *Ladri di biciclette* and a broken sensory-motor schema because it is unclear what this failing would actually entail in terms of coordination, behavioral responses, motor skills, and the like. Moreover, the emergence of children as the protagonists best exemplifying the unnatural, traumatic nature of the conflict was common to literature as well, as in Andrej Platonov's short story 'The return,' where 12-year-old Petrushka has become, in the absence of his soldier father, the true head of the household and 'has grown into a minor tyrant'[26] who, in the words of the returning father, the dispirited Aleksej Alekseevich Ivanov, talks like a grandfather and is now parenting the entire family, his father included. However, it is the detachment and separation Bálint Kovács mentions when assessing the new function of cinema in Deleuze's 'evolutionist' idea, that is to reconnect and somehow reconcile man and world in their now struggling relationship. But also the aspect of social consciousness and commitment can be linked with the renegotiation of human connections. If we try to expand on Deleuze's idea of modern cinema as the bearer of a fundamental dissociation between those two sides, in Italian cinema such a gap is even more dramatic because Neorealism and the 'serious practices' of the twenty years that followed engaged the question of edification and maintenance of a country in a permanent crisis, a country whose identity was not there. I believe that the questions that George Toles chose to delimit De Sica's aesthetic of presentness are relevant to works filmed after the years of heroic Neorealism and are at the basis of, among others, Fellini, Antonioni, Vancini, Pietrangeli

and their 'cinema of the seer,' a character who has to reconfigure his act of seeing and reconcile his presence in the world:

> The recurring questions implicit in De Sica's early films seem to be these: What is it in a given predicament that prevents the world from remaining fully present and connected to those who are involved in it? How does privation keep one not merely hungry or cold or alone but also unseeing?[27]

It is an approach one finds also in *I giorni contati* (1963) by Elio Petri, which deals with the dispirited journey of a man in his fifties – played by Salvo Randone – who tries to make the most of his 'counted days' after witnessing the death of a man his age. *I giorni contati* is cinema of the encounter, of Zavattinian *pedinamento*, of the seer, of incompatible durations between the middle-aged man and those around him – friends, ex-lovers, his son, the random people he tries to make experience a flicker of joy, attempting the impossible reconciliation between internal time and production time.[28] One of Randone's friends is played by Vittorio Caprioli, whose cool and enigmatic demeanor fits perfectly with the existential analytics of Petri. Wry and yet sympathetic in its depiction of decline, *I giorni contati* is reminiscent of Eric Rohmer's *Le signe du lion* (1962). One may expect to find such portrayals of disconnectedness only in pseudo-existential stories, but no branch of human activity is untouched: in a phase of disquieting uncertainty even political engagement is perceived as an insufficient spiritual investment. Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's *Un uomo da bruciare* (1962) is about a political activist, played by Gian Maria Volonté with his usual exaggerated tones, assassinated by the Mafia. Volonté's enstranged character already belongs to the ranks of the alienated, thus initiating the question on the very possibility of political cinema and of making cinema from the 'Left.' The Tavianis would later move on to bleaker political metaphors with *San Michele aveva un gallo* (1972) and *Allonsanfàn* (1974), exploring the root of the notions of revolution and civil progress.

Without bending history too much, an argument could be made about Neorealism being a revolt against the past corresponding to Truffaut's uneasiness about 'a certain tendency of French cinema.' Truffaut's Italian correspondents did not form a movement that deemed it necessary to film in the streets or grant unprecedented autonomy and status to the *auteur* because Neorealism had already taken care of all of that. The realist–modernist transition contains the identitarian transactions from the end of the war until the end of the 1960s, the last opportunity for a national renovation all but dead. Once the fervor of spiritual and material reconstruction fades and no palingenetic miracle is in sight, defeat is taken for granted: generalized distrust

of authenticity coming from the people becomes explicit, as in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (1975). The ideological turn taking place around 1968 saw filmmakers chase the political ferments and imbue their works with neo-avant-garde poetics, often through an extreme dissolution of classic narrative and through an exchange with other forms of art such as mime, comics, ballet. Some examples are Bertolucci's *Partner* (1968), Paolo Spinola's *La donna invisibile* (1969), Elio Petri's *Un tranquillo posto di campagna* (1968), Carmelo Bene's theatrical reconstructions, Romano Scavolini's nihilistic works – such as the stunning *A mosca cieca* (1966) – and Tinto Brass's manifestos of counterculture *Yankee* (1966), *Col cuore in gola* (1967), *L'urlo* (1968), *Nerosubianco* (1969), *Dropout* (1970) and *La vacanza* (1971). The physical death of Pasolini, with the never-dismissed participation of state apparatuses for the organization of the attack, and the 'lead years' of Terrorism confirmed the vulnerability of Italian democracy and the fragility of the intellectual. During those times Elio Petri was the director who interpreted the state of things in Italy with unrelenting pessimism, tackling many of the neuralgic problems affecting society at large. With *A ciascuno il suo* (1967), he depicted the incapacity of intellectuals and of the Left to understand the Mafia, before delving in the 1970s into the schizophrenic nature of power structures such as the capitalist mode of production and the assembly line (*La classe operaia va in Paradiso*, 1971), state apparatuses of repression (*Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto*, 1970), political power of the Christian Democrats (*Todo modo*, 1976), and self-alienation generated by money and consumption (*La proprietà non è più un furto*, 1973). Once hailed as a luminous representative of Italy's new cinema, in the eyes of some Petri regressed to a more traditional and heavily symbolic style for some of his analyses of Italy's woes. The debate on his legacy has been an extremely controversial one and metaphorically shows the problematicity of Italian cinema in its political declination: when he saw *La classe operaia va in Paradiso*, the bona fide new-wave auteur Jean-Marie Straub called, with the usual sobriety and moderation, for a pyre where all the copies of the movie should be burned. The concurrent explosion of genre movies paved the way for the advent of postmodern cinema. In particular, works like Sergio Leone's *C'era una volta il West* (1968) exposed – by glorifying it – the myth-making nature of cinema and particularly the deep-focus, ideological shots hinting at the necessity of 'civilization' as in John Ford's *My Darling Clementine* (1946), and introduced in film a type of *ars combinatoria* that will later culminate in celibate assembly lines such as Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* (2003–4) and *Death Proof* (2007), 'installations' where dialogues, filmic quotations and musical scores could be randomly fractured and rearranged without major consequences to the final result.

The Use and Abuse of Neorealism

Noël Carroll writes that 'realism is not a simple relation between films and the world but a relation of contrast between films that is interpreted in virtue of analogies to aspects of reality.'[29] The passage is especially pertinent to the confrontational effort traversing the years at issue, during which sophisticated narratives were held as superfluous excess and were completely abandoned by many directors whose ultimate goal was to break through conventional styles of representation. The rarefaction of narrative structures and, in general, a cautious attitude toward any type of narrativization was already evident since *Ossessione*. Rossellini explicitly set Neorealism apart from the conventional cinema of theatrical mediation: 'the object of the realist film is "the world," not the story or the plot,'[30] while Zavattini tended to magnify the biopolitical scope of cinema, arguing that thus far the bourgeoisie had monopolized the mode of representation, invoking a change of pace that would also involve less fortunate strata of society, which in turn brought about the romanticization of imaginary communities.[31] Giorgio Tinazzi, the first to write about a 'dilution' of narrative modules in *Umberto D.* (1952), recapitulated the tendency, underscoring the revolution integral to the new oppositional realism:

> The non-outstanding as object of representation entailed the rejection of the hierarchization of facts as requested by narrative construction, because it tended to privilege the 'points' of signification instead of the facts not necessary to its *development*. Narrative synthesis is almost always born out of artificiality, analyticity instead picks fact apart, confers to it – by lowering it – its 'humanity.'[32]

The famous scene in *Umberto D.* in which the maid stands by the stove, touches her belly, has a painful reminder being pregnant, then silently weeps while grinding coffee is an example of the complex use of the 'unessential,' representing the real duration of raw feelings, the pursuit of truth through imperceptible details, a digression – a 'full immersion' – into a state of being, an existential reflection on the reasons why one should go on with life when overwhelmed by adversity. In spite of its sentimentality and the 'blackmail' – or cliché, as Deleuze would say – use of the little mutt Flike, *Umberto D.* feels like an advanced stage of filmic experimentation and not a mannerist retrenchment. With saturated scenes that are almost agonizingly extended, replacing the actions that are linked together to prop up the internal logic of the narrative, De Sica does not eschew conventional identification with the protagonist nor the emotional 'security' of a somehow controlled narrative, and makes a neohumanist version of Antonioni's *Cronaca di un amore* (1950).

There is a fine line between extracting realism's innovative force and

deterministically ghettoizing Italian cinema in strictly realist boundaries. Many scholars believe that one of the central vocations of Italian cinema, even before Neorealism,[33] has been, to quote Ivone Margulies, the quest for 'a cinema animated by a double movement of misrecognition and social adjustment.'[34] Others, like Mira Liehm, are even more direct: 'The trend toward realism has always been the most important of the Italian artistic endeavors.'[35] Margulies is describing Cesare Zavattini's re-enactment project *L'amore in città* (1953), but the space given to the poor and the underprivileged traverses the entire corpus of Italian film from its origin to date, as if realism itself equates with a sort of compensating effort to restore the place of the low-life in modern Italy,[36] those who do not appear in that which novelist Elsa Morante called 'la grande storia.'[37] As Tinazzi writes, Neorealism tried to restore the signifying capacity of 'zones of reality considered useless or marginal,' making them true subjects of history: Marxist criticism felt it fell short of its goals because of the rhetorical encumbrance and shortcomings of the Resistance/Reconstruction ideology, determining stylistic consequences with 'the narrative arc resulting in a form of populism, the positive character acting like a guarantee, the sentimentality plugging every leak.'[38] It is this form of generic naturalism that Pasolini had in mind when he derisively described Morante's apparently populist novel *La storia*, a sophisticated exercise in irony, as too consolatory and 'neorealist.'

After the end of the war there was a historical need for deliberate research, exploring the medium as the political instrument that could finally grant social equality to the marginal and the dispossessed, making cinema a loyal representative of difference and subalternity, fleeing from 'spectacular' locales reconstructed in a studio and towards the dirt and misery of slums and *borgate*. If it is true that Italian film is quintessentially realist in its 'serious practices,' and within this natural calling there is in turn a privileged space where filmmakers experiment and test the medium's potential for redeeming the poor and the weak, then Neorealism did in fact create a counter-discourse, pinpointing the failures, denouncing the aggressiveness of regimes, striving to conjure up a different idea of communal life. Pressing issues of identity formation were being addressed in the aesthetic equation with a distinct emphasis on a new spectatorship. The 'mass audience' that was pursued was not only the heterogeneous body of viewers potentially interested in the final product, but also a people, the Italian people, that after the war needed to be re-educated and detoxified from Fascism's venomous mythology. In other words, Neorealism's daunting task was to establish a double gaze into the past to be done away with and into the future to be edified in accordance with new ethical directives, while resisting politicization from the Left – which was instrumentally hailing film directors as a 'collective intellectual' – and hostility from the majority of the Christian Democrats, who did not tolerate criticism and were not properly trained in the 'freedom of expression' department. One should also mention

Pietro Germi's 'minoritarian' approach, actually questioning the adequacy of political action, and shifting the focus, in the man-social environment relationship, to the potential of individual agency and the role of justice. In *Il cammino della speranza* (1950), Germi represented a pitiful company of immigrants literally fighting their way to France and whose best ally in the desperate quest to reclaim human dignity is not unions or other – in Germi's eyes – opportunist organizations, but only the Law, and – Germi hoped to teach – it is by persevering in respecting the law and exploring their options within its boundaries that they will preserve their identity.

The filmmaker often took upon himself the heraldic role of interpreter of popular demands, and the voice of the speechless and political avant-garde, condemning the omissions and oversights of the political forces. If Italian directors of the 1960s distilled the Neorealist image for their own aesthetic agenda, one may also argue that the ethical stance behind it resurfaced in the treatment of the economic miracle as a missed opportunity for a wounded community. In the conception of Neorealism as 'nervousness' and urgency to create testimony born out of history, the formula would come in handy for historical ruptures, for revolutions that are ready to explode: the expressionism of a movie like Rossellini's *Germania anno zero* would be an ideal template for the depiction of the desperation of a people via portrayal of its weakest and most helpless members. By the same token, a film like *Paisà* could propagate its message to all future partisans fighting against totalitarian regimes and colonial occupations. The most advanced equilibrium that balances the aggressiveness of critical realism, the urgency of narrating the story of a Resistance exemplary for all the oppressed peoples, and the authorial sophistication of subjective stylistics is Gillo Pontecorvo's *La battaglia di Algeri* (1966), a movie commissioned by the Algerian Liberation Front to celebrate the end of French colonial rule. The movie pits the military phalanx of the ALF, which Pontecorvo literally identifies with the people of Algeria, against the French occupants, resorting to the anti-terrorism expertise of Colonel Mathieu, played by Jean Martin, to annihilate the Resistance. Colonel Mathieu is portrayed as a brilliant but degenerated byproduct of Enlightenment due to his rationally systematic thought at the service of colonial coercion and his triumphant use of knowledge aimed at preserving the imposed colonial 'equality.' Adorno's critique of Enlightenment as the equivalence of knowledge and power comes to mind as we witness the state of denial of Colonel Mathieu when he justifies the use of torture. The sequence in which three young Algerian women – all nonprofessionals, like the entire cast except Martin – westernize their hair and seek to leave bombs that will later detonate in the red zone is remembered as one of the most stunning of all time. In this long series of silent gestures, Pontecorvo puts on display the sumptuousness of a people, emerging more forcefully because it is being repressed in blood. It is also an indictment of the

Western people in general, grown so blindly accustomed to their values that they are now incapable of imagining someone misusing them instrumentally or, worse, to subvert them in order to bring death and destruction. The most significant achievement of *La battaglia di Algeri* is that of completing the Rossellinian methodology by inscribing in its approach the colonial past of Europe, conveniently forgotten by neorealist filmmakers.

Immediately after the war, Rossellini and Vergano were the directors who dealt directly with the Resistance as a possible ethical platform for the future nation: they, geographically and spiritually, reconstituted Italy as a liberated community. In this sense, Neorealism fulfilled the pursuit of an authentic national tradition, one of the main strands of the debate on cinema since the late 1930s. Films like Vergano's *Il sole sorge ancora* made possible the identitarian investment of the Italian people in cinema as an inclusive medium. Questions regarding the character of Italian identity were raised by Pierre Sorlin, who, 'instead of considering 'Italianness' a datum which can be hunted down in artistic works,' observed the progressive building of a national cinematic culture trying to find out 'what was genuinely Italian or perfectly international in the movies that Italian studios produced.'[39] Sorlin's approach to Neorealism as a category is decrowning, a reduction to an illusory elaboration, a semiotic game. Joining Christopher Wagstaff in the discussion whether it would be fair or not to include *Roma città aperta* in the Neorealist canon, Sorlin writes:

> Neorealism was a vacant signifier and they adopted it . . . Had it not been for the polemics that surrounded them . . . Neorealist films would have become, simply, 'the fabulous Italian films of the late 1940s'. But critics, intellectuals and politicians created a 'genre'. But their interpretations were discordant; some thought that it was the best description of the moral and physical destruction caused by the war, others maintained that it provided a metaphysical image of human beings faced with despair. They created it since the films we still consider Neorealist are essentially theirs . . . Neorealism has, in fact, not just one, but a variety of meanings. It is a tendency identified first by critics, then by spectators, finally turned into a series, or rather a generic field.[40]

The totemic use of Neorealism turned it into a holy relic, reminding posterity about the 'true,' necessary – almost in Hegelian terms – direction of Italian cinema, with its certain boundaries and clear mission. Indicating Neorealism as a prescriptive principle implies a dogmatic reading of Italian cinema, with the risk of granting an ethical boon to the loyalists who did not deviate from the beaten track. In *Passion and Defiance*, Mira Liehm described the Neorealist family as an incarnation of Gramsci's modern prince, having bor-

rowed from the philosopher the principle of the intellectual as organizer. By retracing the ideas of such scholars as Giuseppe Ferrara, Mario Gromo, Jurij Lotman and others, who have seen in Neorealism an oppositional force to previous aesthetics, Liehm comes to the conclusion that probably the most appropriate and insightful theoretical description of Neorealism was carried out by Amédée Ayfre, characterizing it as a movement that went beyond previous aesthetics based on the emphasis of reality, be it naturalism or *verismo*; or, in cinema, the French populism of the thirties or the British documentary school of John Grierson and Basil Wright.[41] This approach looked at Neorealism 'as a movement that used the full capacity of the film medium in order to capture not only real events but also their deeper significance.'[42] A fierce debate on the appropriateness of the phenomenological interpretation of Neorealism and its putative incapacity to adequately consider the historical temporality of Neorealist art was very much in force until the mid-1960s. The main struggle was to devise the appropriate instruments, considering both the aesthetic and formal impact of Neorealism and the ideological axis around which it was revolving. The 'relationist' interpretation of Neorealism by Ferrara, Enzo Paci, Carlo Battisti, and Brunello Rondi disengaged the notion of historical process from idealistic constraints and established man as 'a core of living relationships, as a center from which infinite roots are growing out.'[43] Liehm calls the 1950s the 'difficult years,' continuing the trend of considering the decade an interlocutory passage between the two traumatic ruptures of the war and the industrial 'revolution,' a situation made even more problematic by the power of censorship offices. Those years gave pluri-awarded works but saw a sort of uncertainty and retreat – the phenomenological dramas of Antonioni, the expressionism of Fellini's *La strada* (1954) and *Le notti di Cabiria* (1957), excursions into an 'elegiac neorealism'[44] deprived of stringent socio-political coordinates and rich with literary topoi and pictorial references to the pathetic nature of the early Picasso. A consensus seems to emerge about the role of phenomenological realism generating a cinematic articulation already modernist in its opacity. Even without expressly ascribing it to a larger modernist phase or to Deleuze's sanctification of Neorealism for its contribution to the history of the image, systemic periodizations already encroach upon the creation of a modernist template. In the words of Siegfried Kracauer, by featuring 'environmental situations rather than private affairs, episodes involving society at large rather than stories centering upon an individual conflict'[45] Neorealism privileged those 'crevices' of reality and anecdotic ways of representation that are the negation of classical realism.

The question of Neorealism as an epistemological horizon was tackled organically at the Pesaro Film Festival and Conference of 1974. Besides the famous theorization of the ethical impulse, a position which at that time seemed to represent an honorable compromise for those who did not want to

join rough-and-ready disposals of the entire phenomenon, the proceedings of the Pesaro seminar show a tremendous effort to form the ideological boundaries and analyze tout court the epistemological domains of the Neorealist discourse. With the proven instruments of semiology and especially of Metzian categories like the motivation of signifying units and their recondite meaning, Gianfranco Bettetini investigated the construction of the Neorealist object, the implication of its iconic nature and of its ideological field of reference. According to Bettetini, Neorealism was a type of cinema that represented 'a complex of objects already articulated according to a semantic system, in its turn referring to a system of values.'[46] Understanding the nature of such values is made difficult because of the emphasis that Neorealist filmmakers put on the verisimilitude effect, sacrificing other semantic constellations and expressive channels. The tension between the idea that, on film, it is in fact possible to perceive reality as it is, and the codes through which such reality is organized, modeled, and finally rendered, resulted in two fundamental questions: what are filmmakers trying to discover through means of realist film, and what is the value granted to the chosen cognitive process? Bettetini argues that in postwar Italy there existed the right historical conditions to experiment with a zero degree of filming, where the 'poetics of refusal' theorized by Jurij Lotman coincided with the refusal of everything ideological that preceded the war. This coincidence made possible the 'complete identification of art and reality existing outside of art.'[47] Neorealism is seen as a lost opportunity whose protagonists were not daring enough, an illusory legacy lost in fanciful pre-capitalist dreams, a spark that did not start a fire, a preliminary phase toward a possible revolution that did not have the political means to succeed.

Gianni Scalia touched precisely on this sore point, stressing the hurried misappropriation of Neorealism made by Marxist scholars: if in Marx there are no aesthetics but only criticism of economic laws, it is hard to understand why Marxist poetics would use realism as a privileged device to study reality as a reflection of such laws. In fact, realist art – and all art in general – should be criticized as a determination of production relations. The epistemological horizon of the Neorealists – Scalia says – seems to be a generically progressive humanism connected to the ideology of national unity, the realist and populist literature of the 1930s, even the robust bourgeois realism of fascist cinema of the 1940s. What De Sica and company did not realize is that the plain exposure of economic diseases does nothing but perpetuate the notions of capitalist production and surplus value, at the same time drastically limiting the possibility of social intervention and improvement; moreover, on a diegetic level, Neorealist endings are completely consistent with the 'constitutive laws' of this faint, nonsubversive and therefore ultimately useless type of protest. This standpoint focusing on Neorealism as a failed experiment and

political defeat is the basis behind Paolo Bertetto's accusation that Neorealist films are a fossilizing practice and intrinsic negation of the avant-garde and experimentation:

> [Neorealism is] an hypothesis of representation through which the transformability of the real is bound to a defined order of classification, in the first place consisting precisely in the negation of whichever transformability . . . it is the predominance of a present interpreted according to the past on a present projected into the future, of the static objectivity of the phenomenon on the dynamic intensity of change.[48]

Bertetto, speaking of an established order of representation where realism is only a link in the chain of ideological ratification – a hypothesis confirmed by apparatus and postmodern theory – sees only two possible routes to escape the ideologized impression of reality that mystifies and deceives: one is militant cinema; the other is attentive investigation into the history of film to identify those crucial moments of rapture producing a quantum leap in the discovery of new forms and new discourses. According to Bertetto, Rossellini is the figure who, better than any other, was able to disclose the undetermined and unexpected, breaking the constraining structuring method of conventional, expectations-based cinema.

In addition to the ideological naïveté, Maurizio Grande and Franco Pecori demystify the very concept of the transparency of works like *Paisà*, which would in fact be a 'peculiar and singularly well-made case of 'disguise' or aesthetic elaboration of historical reality.'[49] The two scholars impute to the movement the misrecognition of film as a mediated text, adopting some of the principles of Marxist philosopher Galvano Della Volpe's *Il verosimile filmico*:

> For neorealism, as far as meaning is concerned, verisimilitude becomes the *institution of similarity*, occupies the institutional level of discourse and, being its *fundamental institute* also for ideological and political 'affections,' realizes the second most important and arbitrary equation: verisimilitude is reality *tout court*.[50]

Amidst all these negative reactions, the expected criticism of Zavattini's populist humanism is carried out by Adelio Ferrero and, in particular, his idea of man: 'exemplary and abstract, connoted by the "universal" categories of "existence" and "pain," where the only possible social determination is that of "humbleness" in its inextricable nexus of suffering and vitality, subordination and need for justice.'[51] For Marxist, 'teleological' criticism, the question of cinematic transparency and the progressive abandonment of straightforward narratives in Italian cinema must go hand in hand with tasks like the reinsertion

of the unprivileged masses into history, adding a quasi-performative dimension to the work of art.

When debating the meaning and function of the word 'realism' in Italian film, immediacy of the photographic image and genuinely mimetic sets of filming procedures are only one aspect of its definition because Italian filmmakers have never refrained from defining their work as realist even when the aesthetic premises would seem to discourage such a label. This apparent contradiction has interested Marcus, who, in her analysis of Pasolini's *Teorema*, questioned a number of problematic statements issued by the director[52] on the very nature of cinematic realism:

> For a filmmaker who abhors naturalism, who reconstructs everything, who is wedded to mythic archetypes, dream work and wish-fulfillment fantasies, it is difficult to fathom Pasolini's logic in designating himself a realist . . . Indeed if Pasolini's claim to realism is to have any meaning at all, it must be considered in the context of his criticism of neorealism.[53]

This explanation captures an important aspect of Pasolini's philosophy of realism and it should be complemented by another approach: the potential of reading into historical, fantastic, mythical, nonrealist plots as accounts or reflections of contemporary economic and social problems. One can observe such mediations, often motivated by Marxist readings, in Pasolini's explicitly political reading of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, 'metaphor of the passage from a tyranny to a democratic regime'[54] and articulated in *Appunti per un'Orestiade africana* (1970). In Italian film, those coherent mediations are the ingredients which turn an artistic creation into a realist one: like a set of aesthetic rules aimed at effortlessly recapturing the flow of daily events and entrusting film to the ontological nature of the photographic image. Pasolini's mythic method seems at first sight incompatible with realism but can be definitively inscribed into *an even more realist tendency*: it is the same tendency that would prompt critics like Roberto Alemanno to judge Bernardo Bertolucci's epic *Novecento* as a pretentious, washed up, unrealistic representation of class struggles, whereas *Star Wars*, thanks to the upright character of the rebellion, was in fact conveying a more vigorous and honest revolutionary message.[55] Pasolini's documentaries are an exploration of the medium in a self-reflexive way reminiscent of cinéma vérité: the filmmaker offers his body as a concentrate of passions, bringing his intellectual sensibility to new worlds and absorbing the ideas and emotions of the people he encounters. The political motivations may be perceived as unconvincing and specious, but the essay form of Pasolini's 'notes' distills with unmediated force the 'scandal' of other cultures while they offer themselves to the camera: obsessed by the ritualistic idea of the gift as opposed to the culture of domination ingrained in 'westernized' relationships,

Pasolini creates a new form of documentary where facts and poetic interpretation collapse into each other. Another example is *Appunti per un film sull'India* (1968), which begins with an 'homage' to Rossellini's *India: Matri Bhumi*. The fourth segment of Rossellini's documentary saw the juxtaposition of the ground – the body of a moribund tamer and his monkey, walking to the village where they were supposed to perform – and the sky, with the vultures circling and waiting for the man to die. Pasolini uses the same ground–sky alternation to symbolize the spiritual contradiction of contemporary India, with endless roads stretching in the distance and vultures descending on the carcasses of dead animals: cinema of poetry conjoining pursuit of the sacred and factual investigation, cinema of mythical realism.

Gian Piero Brunetta views Neorealism as the instrument that more than any other is capable of taking the pulse of the country, explaining its social and economic changes, always conferring to the elements of its aesthetics a potential for representation of more general and widespread conditions:

> The voice of the Narrating I turns into a collective voice in an act of utterance at the highest peak of doleful awareness. The eye of the camera takes the role of a retinal background where a myriad of previously unknown images converge to, releasing an ethos and pathos never found before. Embarking in the discovery of an entire people and an unknown country the authors observe, especially in their richness and simplicity, new forms of gestural and verbal communication and new types of interaction of man with his environment. They discover the man of the street, his face, his body, his gestures, his pain, his strength, his endurance, his way of judging and reacting. They manage to let looks, silences and objects speak, recording the wounds in people and things.[56]

Brunetta looks at the discontinuity with white-telephone cinema: the parasitic relationship that cinema entertained with theater and literature functioned as hindrance of the full autonomy and awareness of the former. Many layers of factual knowledge and moral engagement are revealed simply by dismissing fictive names and impossibly constructed characters. The scholar discovered other working hypotheses and thematic lines in the entire Neorealist *corpus*, such as the interpellation through dialect and Italian language that was not artificial, to make sure that all the strata of the population could be involved; the politicization of cinema and a new cultural dirigisme during the electoral campaign for the first free elections after Fascism in 1948; and the emphasis on the journey that many of the protagonists must undertake to improve their lives and pitiful conditions, an anticipation of the modernist 'strolling' motif so common to many works of the 1960s. Brunetta insisted on the 'capacity of multiplication and expansion of the visible as one of the fundamental

characteristics of Neorealist cinema,'[57] and on Neorealism as a formidable tool capable of implementing the formation of a national identity:

> The neorealist look is an inclusive and totalizing look whose goal is also to take in at a glance the Italian territory in all of its extension . . . and to demonstrate how an entire people can become the protagonist of a gigantic epic, whose narrative modules can sometimes be lofty, sometimes tragicomic, but mainly organized as a prose and as a *sermo communis*.[58]

It is a common language seldom capable of providing lasting inspiration, though. Debating Gramsci's ideas on ideology and literature, Fernaldo Di Giammatteo said that in Italian cinema pictures are made as replicas, and history does not provide any clues for the *uomo nuovo*, or revolutionary man. The scholar very honestly recognizes that the quiet death of Neorealism can also be ascribed to the 'minimalist' nature of its enterprise, not refounding humankind but simply showing what Merleau-Ponty called the exceeding matter of film, its additional laws and drama, common to other types of cinema:

> In the most typical neorealist films there is always something exceeding, because the story they tell cannot contain all that the director would like to include. The story is generally structured rigidly but still creates the illusion that the external world takes part in the narrated facts, broadening their meaning. Illusion and utopia confer such a high value to Neorealism.[59]

In *Visconti e il Neorealismo: Ossessione, La terra trema, Bellissima,* Lino Micciché insists on the birth of Neorealism as the natural conclusion of an itinerary of cultural renewal that started in the mid-1930s and culminated with *Ossessione* in 1943. Micciché is not concerned with potentially realistic lines in Italy's previous cinema. Rather, he sees *Ossessione* as the ripe yield coming after a learned debate taking place in the journal *Cinema*, oriented toward a conscious rehabilitation of a literary matrix for Italian cinema – the most important models being the verist writer Giovanni Verga and the French Naturalists – and imbued with political militancy. On this score, Micciché inscribes *Ossessione* with a revolutionary perspective by quoting and giving credit to some comments made by Pietro Ingrao, later an influential figure of the PCI, who highlighted the political message of the movie, which transfigured the 'humanity that suffers and hopes' portrayed in *Ossessione* into a signifier of the working class.[60] The novelty of *Ossessione* lies in the extraneousness that the two lovers feel for the order in which they have to function, while in the novel on which the movie is based – *The Postman Always Rings Twice* by

James M. Cain – Micciché sees an organic relationship between characters and environment. Such indomitable alterity is the connective tissue of the movie, leading to 'the first cinema discourse in Italy whose reasons are fury and death, desire and solitude.'[61] Although he expands on the similarities in some dialogues and in the overall scenario, Micciché is not willing to grant to the original novel a wider importance. Quoting Visconti's words, the novel served as a 'fragmentary sketch.'[62] Inspiration came from other sources: the novelty of a plastic, crude and sweaty representation of Italy; the urgent need to grant cinematic citizenship to previously unapproachable subjects; the consciousness of a new status to which filmmakers could now legitimately aspire – that of heralds of a new ethical bond between people, in a new spiritual community founded on solidarity and egalitarianism. But this generic core explains only partially the energy that a movie like *Ossessione* still emits today. Micciché dismantles Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's argument about the film being a work reflecting the destructive power of sexual concupiscence, saying that the true tragedy of which the movie is both metaphor and representation lies in 'the impossibility of Liberation, the insatiability of Desire, the Unbearability of the Norm, and the Impracticability of the Escape,' almost in existential fashion, but already prefiguring the cinema of ambiguity of the 1960s.[63]

In *Gli anni del neorealismo*, Alfonso Canziani confirms the problems scholars have to face when confronted with the innovative charge of Neorealism and the real causes that determined its death. This book by Canziani is extremely important because it springs from the unfaltering conviction, argued with pure Marxist analysis, that, not only did Neorealism in fact gloriously exist, but it was the unfathomable event that opened new paths, as well as the unexpected renaissance that appropriately became a religion. Canziani blames the active intervention of reactionary forces aimed at shutting down the whole movement, yet at the same time he admits that there was still fertile ground on which to make good movies, had filmmakers tried to do it. He implicitly attacked the makers of comedies and unorthodox products from his leftist position. And, given the oppositional stance he takes against the old-style fascist flicks, his words are clearest when he attempts a positive definition of the conscious, social efforts of Neorealism:

> Neorealist cinema was a movement of political and social advancement after decades of ignorance and disinformation. It was a type of cinema realized as a hopeful contribution aimed at solving the ancient ills of our country, among which are the indifference of middle classes, the detachment of the lower masses from political issues and the tendency to solve house, work and security problems separately, as individual cases. Neorealism gave evidence and problematic data from the viewpoints of Christian humanitarianism and social solidarity.[64]

As Canziani states, before World War II the predominant slant of Italian culture is an irritating and politically dishonest declamatory, academic and celebrative slant of bourgeois ideals, connected to the pseudo-culture of the conservative class, whereas 'the poetics of neorealism is instead that of man that can be versus the man that is, in contrast with "power" and therefore proposing itself as a formidable platform for any international cinema school trying to free its citizenship from forms of economic and social slavery.'[65] Another important observation made by Canziani is that the ideals of such conservative social strata were even more reactionary than in other European countries, at least those that had had a bourgeois revolution. The absence of a bourgeois revolution explains the predominance of an idealist culture so ready to be imbued with Marxist philosophy, as well as the pact between the Catholic and Communist forces which aimed at an equal distribution of power between them, and is the reason for the permanence of populist and paleo-capitalist models in Italian culture.

Questioning the character of Italian identity, Pierre Sorlin writes that quite often the process of identity constructions takes place in front of our very eyes, pushing filmmakers into foundational roles of interpreters and explorers of the national spirit. Sorlin relates the recurring phenomena of motion pictures made exclusively for foreign sales or toying with a mythologized image of Italy gelling into marketable options – loosely 'Neorealist' art movies, postcard movies, Sophia Loren's regional incarnation as the muse of underdevelopment,[66] etc. – with the impact they had on the formation of such identity. As Manuela Gieri similarly pointed out, Neorealism could be easily mystified by naïve critics or, worse, by interested, politicized ranks: 'Italian Neorealism was already holding back Italian cinema in the late 1950s. It inhibited the growth and development of a new wave in Italian filmmaking in the 1960s, and eventually 'contaminated' the Italian cinematic panorama until the 1970s.'[67] An attempt at extrapolating a set of defining stylistic norms is the one carried out by Marcus, where the scholar tries to find a lowest common denominator among the previously acknowledged lack of conformity and consistency of Neorealist practitioners:

> The rules governing neorealist practice would include location shooting, lengthy takes, unobtrusive editing, natural lighting, a predominance of medium and long shots, respect for the continuity of time and space, use of contemporary, true-to-life subjects, an uncontrived, open-ended plot, working class protagonists, a nonprofessional cast, dialogue in the vernacular, active viewer involvement, and implied social criticism.[68]

Sidney Gottlieb, using the same list compiled by Marcus in reference to *Roma città aperta*, dismissed the futility of this approach, confirming that at

stake was the creation of a new community with cinematic devices carefully oscillating between tradition and innovation:

> It was filmed partly on or near evocative real locations of the events it portrays or alludes to, but much of the action takes place in four carefully designed sets; medium and long shots indeed position the characters in their environment, apart from which they can't be fully understood, but the film is also punctuated by sudden close shots, all the more striking because of their rarity; much of the dramatic impact of the film comes from abrupt cuts, and many 'wipes' alert us to rather than conceal quick scene shifts; natural lighting is frequently contrasted with highly effective, often expressionist artificial lighting effects; time and space are repeatedly broken up by ellipses and jumps; true-to-life subjects are colored by melodrama and exaggeration, and exist alongside caricatured figures of evil and weakness; the plot has some patently formulaic elements, and the ending is by no means thoroughly inconclusive; the term *working class* must be greatly expanded to incorporate all the major protagonists (this is part of the intention of the film, I should note, emphasizing our shared humanity); the cast includes experienced actors and actresses, used in conventional and unconventional ways; the dialogue highlights varieties of the vernacular, as well as several styles and types of language identified and threatening; spectators are construed to a certain extent as independently critical and reflective, but are also 'directed' by carefully established patterns of shock and identification with and revulsion from certain characters; and, finally, the social criticism is direct, extensive, and central to the design of the film.[69]

In the essay 'The Italian Redemption of Cinema: Neorealism from Bazin to Godard,' a critique of Gilles Deleuze's category of the time-image and periodization of post-Neorealist Italian cinema, Alessia Ricciardi has shown how problematic it is to keep together the aesthetic and formal specificity of Neorealism with its socio-historical force of gravity. Neorealism stands out as a way for Italy to catch up with European avant-garde filmmakers and their conquest of optical space, an evolutionary stage of the medium supplied with an overt ethical mandate. It is similarly problematic to handpick works of 'Neorealist inspiration' because the dissimilarities and divergences among the approaches of Neorealism's contributors are so incommensurable that moving forward past the Neorealist ambiguity is first and foremost a matter of clarity. On an individual basis, it is mandatory to carefully map the diversified methodologies – from Rossellini's 'pedagogy of vision' and 'stratified continuity'[70] to De Sica's 'alienation countered by affection'[71] to

Visconti's decadent materialism – and yet all of them invested in giving a thorough account of the after-war catastrophe and emphasizing the disunion of a society that survived an apocalyptic past only to be hurled into a disquieting present. However, no matter how much partisanship is involved in the abuse of Neorealism and its transformation into a journalistic category or a fetish revived on the occasion of international film festivals, it is necessary to stress that the separation between what comes before *Ossessione* and what comes after is substantial. Theoretical groundings and formal devices dividing De Sica from Rossellini or Visconti from De Santis notwithstanding, the distance from post-*Ossessione* works like *Riso amaro*, *Umberto D.*, *Paisà* and white telephones/art deco products is so enormous that one could almost perceive them as products manufactured in different eras.[72] One example: Carlo Celli has convincingly pinpointed the similarities between the De Sica-Camerini collaborations and *Ladri di biciclette*: the leads are always looking for an object, a status-changing 'device,'[73] even a simulacrum thrusting them into a higher social status. But even though in *Gli uomini, che mascalzoni!* (1932) *Grandi magazzini* (1939) and *Il signor Max* (1937) we do sometimes have close-ups of such objects – think of the car that De Sica temporarily steals to impress his sweetheart in *Gli uomini, che mascalzoni!* – one does not find shots like the Fides bicycle in *Ladri di biciclette* – almost an eerily fetishizing shot creating a state of suspension – with its existential implications for the options of man in this world when he is not 'attached' to an inanimate object instantaneously bestowing upon him the title of Worker, Husband, and Father. In other words, one may share the view of Christopher Wagstaff, who does not 'propose a poetics to cover all films conventionally embraced by the qualification 'neorealist',[74] but one has to think that Neorealism, albeit unsystematic, heterogeneous and cooperative, not only was the true revolution that made cinema suitable again for expressing contemporary sensibilities balancing ideology and representation, but it also carried its experimental stimulus deep into a modernist territory. The Neorealist articulation instituted a new type of image with different filmic clauses, shaking the coordinates of the previous mode of representation and connecting to one of modernism's main stances, the crisis in the relationship between man and a compressed, apparently domesticated but menacing (city-)space. Bálint Kovács clarified that the transition between realism and modernism is first and foremost a matter of abandoning recognizable milieux: '[i]t is . . . with the split between the character and her social or historical background that modernism starts.'[75] One may wonder to what extent such an orthodox formulation could apply to filmmakers such as De Santis, Vergano and the Visconti of *La terra trema*: it would definitely apply to De Sica, who is not exclusively interested in social types or concrete demands brought about by specific economic tribulations, but also in the struggles of man as a metaphysical precondition, or to Rossellini, who swiftly moves

toward a sophisticated film grammar of mental *flâneries* privileging erasures and ellipses.

The Realist–Modernist Reverberation and the Notion of Dialectic Realism

The continuity between Neorealism and post-Neorealist cinema of the 1950s and the 1960s will be established as a sui generis Italian wave: a cinema of arrhythmias, of exploration outside the representational order, accepting Neorealism as a revolution of the image but deconstructing its mythical use. Italy's heterogeneous wave is a creative phase open to self-redefinition, in which Neorealism's realist–modernist intuition branches out into a mode of filmmaking that transcends logical narrative and then culminates at a stage where modernism and postmodernism begin to overlap (Fellini). There are also practices of critical realism (Rosi), in which the preeminence given to the collective would seems to exclude Deleuze's emphasis on the erratic wandering of a single protagonist, as stated by Mary P. Wood; however Deleuze inscribes Rosi in a modernist domain through a faceless power assigning the parts of history.

The more studies and monographs dealing with Neorealism reject the generic idea of Neorealism as 'shared moral commitment [that] united filmmakers "from above," dissolving their stylistic differences into basic agreement on the larger issues of human concerns and general world view,'[76] the more the approach becomes loose and diversified, broadly investigating historical, social, economic and geopolitical contexts in an attempt to finally nail the definitive word on the phenomenon. And yet, by narrowing or widening the angle of the inquiries, Neorealism inevitably ends up becoming an anamorphic image that exists only if one explicitly looks for it. The construction of Neorealism as a discourse in the postwar years became almost synonymous with the definitive discovery of an 'ontological' nature inside Italian cinema, a nature that Neorealism had finally unveiled once and for all. But even acknowledging its ethereal nature and the want of revolutionary subversion in Neorealist enterprises, the wealth of cinematic solutions inaugurated with *Ossessione* instantaneously became a worldwide source of inspiration for all those cinematographies trying to renew their filmic coordinates. Extracting the adventurous, if not the epic, from the daily, ordinary lives of marginal people; celebrating disharmony and negating consolation; letting silence and anguish drive the stories, with uncertainty about any 'development' in the plot: these were some of the ferments to be transferred from Italy to Europe and beyond and remodulated to support local and global agendas, resulting in the phenomenon called 'the rise of national cinemas.' In the end, if the waning of Neorealism has to be attributed to its vain 'aspiration to change the world,'[77]

the studies of its reception and appropriation abroad show how it was considered the cinema of liberation par excellence, aesthetically and also, to a lesser extent, politically. One of Neorealism's most remarkable achievements was to make characters occupy, almost colonize, space, going beyond traditional psychological, 'flowing' fiction and placing the actors in indifferent, if not hostile, environments. Neorealism instituted a dialectics between the characters and the profilmic: the interaction brought to the surface the former's fragility and desperation, but also their spiritual resources, their feelings, love and courage. The advent of a revolutionary template – Gilles Deleuze's time-image, the emergence of 'narrative situations [which] appear where reality is represented as lacunary and dispersive'[78] typified by the characters' ineffectiveness at changing their milieux – that will suit the restless new cinemas, cannot be overlooked because of imaginary shortcomings in the 'revolution' or 'cooperation' department, especially if its preservation was a shrewd business decision by militant critics.

The collapse of the subject and the fundamental disjunction between man and environment are not the exclusive property of 'intellectual' art cinema but propagates into the realm of other genres as well. Also comedies play a crucial role at indexing the existential rift generated by the unevenness of a modernization perceived as a threat, as a way to render some of Italy's worst vices even more extreme. The cynicism of Italian comedies is more than just a comic frame: it becomes a way of life and a reaction to disparities and inequalities. Angelo Restivo has put in the same sentence the names of Antonioni, Pasolini, and Dino Risi in his take on Italian cinema during the economic miracle. Whereas the 'mental' cinema of Pasolini and Antonioni is a cinema interpreting new conformisms, where individual stories are either absent or subsumed into an intellectual system that aims to be a tool that shapes collective identities, Risi's comedies index the anthropological mutations and shoulder the social transformations, courageously advancing past straightforward satire. Displacement of archaic cultures is a constant in the most representative Italian comedies by Dino Risi and Antonio Pietrangeli. Consistent with Deleuze's claim of 'modern cinema [as] a mental substitute for the lost link between man and the world,'[79] images become opaque surfaces crowded with visual and identitarian references; narratives are defective and incomplete, testifying about weakened nexus and broken 'fibers' in the universe; any-space-whatevers proliferate, destroying the convenient ontology of ordered continuity. In the light of their attempt to account for individual space in a changing reality that society cannot appropriate, comedies can be interpreted as the true realist works in Italian cinematography, bearers of '[a]n internally conflicted model of cultural modernity'[80] that is indispensable to place the encounter with westernization in perspective and homogenize 'the fabulous films of the Italian 1940s' with the internationalist authors. And many of the *commedie all'italiana* either

retain a modernist background or complicate the comedic assumptions with sophisticated analysis of questions of identity, history, and individuality. As Jean Douchet wrote about the French New Wave, it is a moral and not a moralizing cinema, 'interested in a concept of movement freed from an obsolete sense of finality,'[81] one where, unlike Hollywood cinema, characters seemed forced to continuously renegotiate their place in the world. In the most outstanding products of *commedia all'italiana* – the ones that did not resort to cheap *caricature* or *macchiette* – the subject is on constant trial, undergoing a process of 'elongation' that stretches his aspirations and desires in unnatural fashion: 'The excessive elasticization of the subject . . . *ensures that the 'I' loses the sense of supremacy over the chaos of the real*.'[82] Distilling the categories proposed by Di Giammatteo, Brunetta, Micciché and Canziani – the overflowing of the image, its openness, the ethos of Christian humanitarianism and socialist solidarity confronting a latent nihilistic impetus – one could find them even in the works that intentionally went to great lengths to separate themselves from a bastardized notion of Neorealism. One such work was Franco Brusati's *Il disordine* (1962), the story of Mario, played by Renato Salvatori, a poor, uneducated young man trying to earn money in order to take his mom out of the nursing home and to find a place where both can live. The movie is structured like a 'progress' through different stations, apparently bringing about more trouble and more disillusionment, à *La dolce vita*. Brusati pits Mario against representatives of all social classes – the first macro-scene takes place at an aristocratic villa where he is hired as a waiter – in order to show the shadow of hopelessness that affects everybody and that nobody seems to have the means to escape. Every sequence is a feverish constellation of passions and characters caught under expressionist lighting as they reveal themselves by meditating on their personal setbacks. The most memorable character is a selfless benefactor, a priest-wannabe thrown out of the Church before taking his vows, hosting homeless people, prostitutes and other dropouts – like Mario – in his house. The fake priest is a like a Kierkegaardian knight of faith, sacrificing himself out of apparent insanity, while his guests ridicule him. His heroic and nonjudgmental compassion is the only answer to the 'disorder' of the title:

> Sure, in Africa it was easier! . . . Down there, giving was just enough to defeat idols and witch doctors . . . But here! . . . Everything gets more complicated . . . An aspirin, a bowl of soup are of no use . . . Here, they put their souls in your hands . . . And I have never known how to recognize them . . .[83]

André Bazin's ideas – his wholehearted admiration for film as the only medium capable of satisfying the unquenchable thirst for reality typical of all the arts; his defense of Rossellini against the attack of Guido Aristarco;

his conception of Neorealism as a form of participation in the world and as a lantern illuminating the path between the facts represented and their transcendental meaning – stand at the crossroads of ontological realism and the modernist evolution of cinema. Bazin's enthusiasm for Neorealism seemed immediately suspect at best, leading to some almost disdainful comments, insisting on the patently religious inspiration of his ardent defense:

> Leaning heavily in his defense of Rossellini on the work of fellow-Catholics like Ayfre, he is led to identify the phenomenological attentiveness with 'love of characters' and of 'reality as such,' 'unpenetrated artificially by ideas or passions.' Having sought a theoretical sanction for an aesthetic or style in the knowledge that the style reflects the structure and dynamics of human consciousness itself, its meaning and significance, he is obliged, ultimately, to look beyond the level of philosophical discourse to the Logos itself. The Neo-Realist, then, will be a 'filtering consciousness;' his images are bound by a kind of ontological identity to their object, and the Neo-Realist cinema, establishing the asymptotic relationship to reality, is ultimately, Contemplation in Love.[84]

Notwithstanding the fetishization of certain traits of what Casetti calls an 'obsession for reproduction'[85] and the teleological evolution of the representation's truthfulness, Bazin's phenomenological framing of Rossellini prefigures many an outcome of the French New Wave and other national cinemas. If photography is the end of the long journey of reproduction of reality, and if cinema is the medium capable of joining the illusion of time to the perfect objectivization of the world, then Neorealism is the irruption of an epistemological statute in the moving pictures, blending with and ethically balancing the simultaneity and ambiguity of modernism. To fully understand the extent and the ramification of Bazin's stance toward Neorealism, one needs to go deeper into its system and see whether the scales of reality tip in favor of the subject or the object. Such terms have to be integrated into one of the philosophical influences shaping Bazin's thought, the existentialist debate to which Bazin contributed with his phenomenological theory. In an essay entitled 'History of Image, Image of History: Subject and Ontology in Bazin,'[86] Philip Rosen scrupulously dismantles the myth of Bazin's fideistic belief in cinema's immediate concreteness, highlighting his complete awareness of the illusionistic nature of the medium, and, as Bazin himself writes, the 'many different routes'[87] that realism can choose. He also sets Bazin very firmly in phenomenological thought by insisting on the intentional, investigative nature of his subject; that is, on a movement proceeding from the subjective to the objective world, which is available exclusively through the abstractions and rationalizations of the subject. One of the keywords of the essay is 'faith': the faith, as Rosen says,

in the indexicality of the image, the faith the subject must provide in the true existence of some referent. Following through Peter Wollen's Peircean description of Bazin, Rosen points out the exclusivity the French scholar granted to indexical significations involving a temporal dimension; thus, Rosen adds, when it comes to conferring credibility to images, temporality plays a crucial role in Bazin's system, because the human's obsessive need to challenge time will reinforce our convictions about the events that are captured and shown. Such obsession is inherent to humans, and Bazin's notorious example of the Egyptian mummies is, in Rosen's words, 'a universal unconscious human need that culture must confront through ritual, religion, art, or in some other way.'[88] Then, the subject will fill in the porous relationship between reality and representation, smoothing out the imperfections of those two planes and finding new pretexts to accept the documentary plausibility of the medium.

Reflecting diachronically on the history and reception of mythology, and using A. J. Greimas' interpretation of Lévi-Strauss, Gianfranco Bettetini saw a direct correspondence between practices of myth formation and narratives in realist operational modes. Both provide models for human conduct, and both have the status of existential routes, hence the creation of 'realist myths.' The realist myth, Bettetini says, does not originate from a collective tradition and is not available for different tasks: unlike the anthropological myth, the realist one is not so malleable, is confined to the immanent ideologies and is not serviceable as an instrument for a scientific inquiry toward the object. Both serve as epistemological replacements for not yet attained knowledge, used to understand otherwise inexplicable phenomena, and both pine away in their narratives. Thus, our realist mythologies could undergo the same wearing effect of time, and in the future look as inadequate as anthropological myths seem to us today.[89] Neorealism gave birth to a different form of narrativization, one that stops short of becoming a conventional reinforcement of something for which man has an unquenchable thirst, the denied hope that there must be some order out there: Rossellini, Visconti, De Santis and De Sica lay claim to an individual identity to be dissolved in the collective, ripe and ready to be seized. Neorealism, for Bazin and others, took on itself the arduous goal of immortalizing an order that is crumbling, working as a cinematic correspondent to the authenticity of the fact, the most rigorous and unmediated adhesion to an illusory concreteness outside of us, but at the same time providing the instruments to destabilize its certainties. Bazin chooses the realistic, anti-expressionist field not for technological determinism, let alone generically humanistic reasons: for him, realist cinema is the ultimate answer – the one with the most outstanding potential and capability – to a genetic disease inscribed in the frailty of man. Cinema becomes tautological evidence of the events that gave birth to it, thus making the audience's investment more comfortable and reassuring. In the interstices of Bazin's thought there are

ideas hinting at a hybridized vision of cinema. By laying the groundwork of an ontological interpretation of the image, Bazin at the same time prefigures the evolution of the medium as noted by Paul Coates in the essay 'European film theory: from crypto-nationalism to trans-nationalism,' where analyzing the idiosyncratic path walked by Kracauer and Bazin to distance themselves from potentially totalitarian art, and taking on the undeveloped Bazinian intuition of a dialectical realism, the scholar arrives at the notion of a modernist realism. Almost echoing Giorgio De Vincenti, according to whom the medium reflects on its reproductive capabilities and is 'preoccupied' with metalinguistic 'stumbles,'[90] Coates writes:

> This commitment to a dialectical realism is most apparent in Bazin, who measures realism in terms of its adequacy to that most modernist of qualities, ambiguity, and defines reality itself as ambiguous. No advocate of Welles could be deemed indifferent to the pleasures and legitimacy of self-evident style, though Bazin seeks to justify it in terms of the way depth-of-field shooting putatively replicates the spectator's position *vis-à-vis* reality, permitting concentration upon either foreground or background . . . Thus Bazin pursued a Janus-faced advocacy of both Welles and Rossellini: '[a]s in the films of Welles and despite conflicts of style, neorealism tends to give back to the cinema a sense of the ambiguity of reality.'[91]

The apparent dichotomy, as Bazin formulated it, between directors who put trust in the image and directors who put trust in reality had already been neutralized by Umberto Barbaro who, by seeing Vsevolod Pudovkin as an ideal figure for a realist-modernist fusion, saw Bazin's divide as 'not an opposition, but rather an adjunct to a truly realist work of art.'[92] According to Barbaro's performative take on the role of art the dialectics between realism and modernism is merely apparent, and he elevates as an example the unity of Pudovkin's synthetic realism, whereby the Soviet filmmaker was able to interface formal manipulations and socio-economic generating conditions. One has also to look at other cinematographies to discern the gradient of innovation versus conservation ingrained in the adoption of realist principles. Speaking of Satyajit Ray's cinematic rhythm and narrative fragmentation, Moinak Biswas confirms Lino Micciché's intuition of Neorealism as the first new wave:

> Describing against the imperative of narrative can render the realist closure problematic. Functioning on the boundary of fiction and documentary, it can render the generic rules unstable and help create new rules. The dialectical possibilities of such description, for example, can be seen to connect two divergent trajectories of neorealism and the nouvelle vague.[93]

Interbreeding modernist and realist tendencies in the works of cineastes previously ascribed to the heroic years of Neorealism is a popular trend among recent commentators. De Sica, Rossellini, and Visconti's approach to realism was the – sometimes seemingly arbitrary – extraction of slices of life from the continuum of existence, up to Antonioni's unmotivated, disengaged spaces filled with unfulfilled anticipation.

As early as 1980 William Siska insisted on the conscious effort carried out by neorealist cinema as 'marketing' itself as modernist art cinema: the prefiguration of modernist staples, such as simultaneity, proximity and subjugation of spaces and manipulation of time has been made explicit by Steimatsky and other scholars. For instance, T. J. Clark ascribed Rossellini to modernism through a reading of Calvino and his emphasis on the necessity of recovering impressionism and the pictorial avant-garde. Almost a manifesto of literary modernism, the introduction to *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* published by Italo Calvino in 1947 is deemed essential by Clark to understand the quantum leap of Italian culture. At first, Calvino writes that objective writing seemed so easily within reach, only to add that Italian intellectuals could not be indifferent to the most important literary currents on the cutting edge in Europe, pictorial and theatrical Expressionism in particular. Calvino's novel may be the first conscious effort after the war and the end of Fascism to give artistic dignity to the marginalized, through their gestures and behaviors, without the entanglement of plot ramifications. By the same token, Bordwell and Thompson see the birth of Neorealism in a generic realist tendency already present in Italian cinema and literature during the last years of the agonizing Fascist regime. They look deeper into the misfortunes of the Italian industry, trying to connect the character of the production by attentively reconstructing the different inputs coming from state executives or party officials as well as the effects of the Andreotti Law of 1949. The erratic progress of most Neorealist plots is assimilated to a resounding epistemological innovation, branching out into a state of consciousness governed by chaos and unpredictability, where all 'facts' are on the same plane:

> Such plot developments, in rejecting the carefully motivated chain of events in classical cinema, seem more objectively realistic, reflecting the chance encounters of daily life. Along with this tendency goes an unprecedented use of ellipsis . . . Neorealist storytelling tends to 'flatten' all events to the same level, playing down climaxes and dwelling on mundane locales or behaviors.[94]

The scholars note how Neorealist conventions and other stylistic aspects then debouched into the mature, authorial stream of the 1960s, exemplified by Michelangelo Antonioni: 'Now a film's plot might mix scenes of banal

conversation with scenes showing the characters reacting to their environment or simply walking or driving through a landscape.'[95] Bordwell is even more explicit in his take on art cinema as an expression of ambiguity (and the watering down of early-modernist film):

> The art cinema motivates its narratives by two principles: realism and authorial expressivity . . . [T]he characters of the art cinema lack defined desires and goals . . . Characters may act for inconsistent reasons . . . Choices are vague or nonexistent. Hence a certain drifting episodic quality to the art film's narrative. Characters may wander out and never reappear; events may lead to nothing.[96]

The transition between Neorealist and post-Neorealist cinema was fluid – with the Neorealist canon already supplied with an 'openness' going beyond immediate socio-economic concern – so that finding the rupture point is problematic, not to mention that the political expectations artificially attached to Neorealism made the celebration of its funeral an act of blasphemy. After moving from Calvino to Cesare Pavese and exalting the opening sentences of Pavese's novel *La casa in collina* as a modernist milestone – the point of view hurling the reader into a chaotic world oblivious of past orders, the wondrous power of evocation, the negation of predictability – Clark goes on to describe the annihilation of collective ideals, with the last, long shot in mind, of Visconti's *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*:

> There Ciro the 'well-adjusted' brother, the Party member and property-owning democrat in the making, finally turns away from the movie's world of tragedy (the past, the South, Mother, the sea and the woods) and heads for the city's outskirts – a wilderness of building sites, skeletons of factories and tenements, dirt roads waiting for asphalt, billboards for candidates and hair cream . . . All of this was called 'neo-realist' when it was happening; though, as Calvino said in retrospect, the label largely flattened the filmmakers' and novelists' engagement with the modernist past.[97]

This quote is reminiscent of a famous excerpt from Rainer Maria Rilke, who, to render the traumatic passage of a human being turned into an empty form among impersonal and fragmented landscapes, wrote of an entity 'placed amongs things like a thing, infinitely alone, and . . . all which is common to them both has withdrawn from things into the common depth'[98] and can help in finding an acceptable definition of the Neorealist–modernist continuum as a cinema of disconnection brought about by the quintessential disrupting experience, war, and not redeemed afterwards, an experience where man

must learn from scratch what it means to be a member of society and eventually rediscover whether being in the world has meaning at all. According to Deleuze, Neorealism, with its stratified images 'swollen' with time, taught how to come to terms with such 'meaning' by inaugurating the breaking down of linear actions, which become convoluted, unsettling crossings into different stages of awareness. Characters are 'acted' by the puzzling junctions of events where different planes intersect and called to decipher what is happening in front of their eyes. Lost in the interstices between frames, audience and characters together are summoned to interpret the emerging new visual and sonic signs:

> [S]hards of time, moments that resist assimilation within a measurable, chronometric time, and Deleuze finds in Italian neorealism the first sustained evidence of the emergence of this shattered temporality.[99]

Rossellini's role in the revolution of the image was his hostility for logical links between cuts and his capacity for withdrawing from the framed material, as though the filmmaker was not creating history but adjusting to its unfolding, pushing the camera into the crevices of flowing time. Rossellini enthusiastically embraced French Jesuit Amédée Ayfre's ideas exposed in 'Neo-realism and Phenomenology,'[100] in which the critic praised the new cinema where 'mystery of being replaces clarity of construction'[101] giving intellectual form to that phenomenological template that can influence directors even today (like Olivier Assayas). One of the points of departure of phenomenological realism seems to be the rejection of an unambiguous order, and the embrace of a modernist sensibility whereby the ethical mandate of the camera is to continuously readjust to the ever-changing world in front of it. The disintegration of narrative schemes and the ontological uncertainty about the protagonists became explicit in works like *L'avventura* (1960), rejecting absolute causality and at the same time conferring a privileged role to the environment that influences the actions of their characters. In general, narrative artifices like saturation, inversion, and resolution after complication were replaced by clusters of events that are exemplary for their emotional and political potential: episodes connect in loosely incomplete fashion, subordinated to a moral construction, an historical message.

András Bálint Kovács' sophisticated taxonomy of late modernist cinema adopts Gilles Deleuze's institution of the time-image, embedding its ontological status in a system centered on the concepts of abstraction, subjectivity and self-reflexivity. Abstraction can be defined as the tendency to weave sophisticated conceptual systems into the film's deep supporting structure, creating multiple commentaries through metaphorical and/or allegorical characters and situations; subjectivity refers to an authorial conception of the director

as a quasi-demiurgic figure, whose works cannot be immediately inserted into a recognized genre or tradition. While abstraction and subjectivity can be easily extrapolated and underscored, the principle of reflexivity does not attain the level of sophistication to question the meaning of representation achieved in other cinematographies, for example, by Ingmar Bergman or Jean-Luc Godard. Italian filmmakers appear at first more concerned with the creation of an autonomous national heritage than with a reflection on the nature of the medium. However, self-reflexivity surfaces as an ambiguous critique of the film industry – 'corrupted' after the palingenetic experience of Neorealism – as disseminator of conformist values and invested in purely commercial enterprises. Practices of self-reflexivity emerge as early as 1946 in *Sciuscià*, with the climactic and visionary scene of the fire in the reformatory after the screening of a Cinegiornale LUCE, as well as in *Ladri di biciclette* – the Rita Hayworth poster, the theatrical performance at the Union headquarters – and in the Neapolitan episode of *Paisà*. Besides the films made about the entertainment industry, like Visconti's *Bellissima* (1951), Antonioni's *La signora senza camelie* (1953), Fellini's *Lo sceicco bianco* (1952), *La strada* (1954), and *Luci del varietà* (1950), co-directed with Alberto Lattuada, there are other notable representatives. For instance, Pietro Germi's *Divorzio all'italiana*, often confined to the dubious realm of regional comedies, is one of the few works of the time consciously reflecting on and calling attention to the medium, using a movie-within-the-movie stratagem to propel the deconstructing mission of the picture. A crucial passage occurs, crowning a perfectly oiled script receiving the Academy Award in 1963, when Marcello Mastroianni, playing Baron Ferdinando Cefalù, leaves the movie theater (where the entire town population is watching *La dolce vita*) hoping to catch his wife in an adulterous act so that he will be able to kill her and receive only a minimum sentence mitigated by all the 'honor' and class implications. In that moment, through the movie-in-a-movie device used to break the illusion of verisimilitude – the actor does not look at the camera nor directly address the audience, but sort of sees himself interpreting a movie from his past body of work – spectators are reminded of the purely fictitious character of Fefè/Mastroianni's struggles. And yet, increasing the tension with the introduction of a loaded gun ready to be discharged, Germi makes a powerful point about the cultural monstrosity that Fefè personifies. The end scene, disorienting like the death of Belmondo in *Pierrot le fou*, with his heart-throb wife, married after an unforgiving ordeal, playing footsie with a young sailor, is another sardonic commentary by Germi, attacking the very idea of love as patriarchal fiction and geo-cultural conditioning, when it is actually an ungovernable force that, if impacted with archaic forms of social control, will only leave gun wounds and dead bodies in its wake. Germi's 'universalist' approach is lauded by Enrico Giacovelli, who wrote that the futile attempt

to tame individual morals and channel love into surreal networks of control, exemplified by the end scene, 'is meant to scoff at all the 'Sicilians' of the world.'[102] In *Divorzio all'italiana* the contamination of genres is a dynamic factor: the picture implements apparently irreconcilable instances, like the star power of Mastroianni subdued to quasi-documentary passages and the use of cartoons and tabloids employed to hint at the populist approach of the media juxtaposed to a farcical re-enactment of the court drama. In Germi's hands, Sicily is not a collection of stereotypes – see the reflexive moments when Mastroianni 'confronts' a poor salesman whose shouting had been used until that point as 'ambient' characterization – but already a post-factual society where women are narrative devices in a fabula driven by ideological stagnation. In its anti-classical connotation, the movie also stands out as an authorial bravura piece disengaged from an established tradition, and where the entire spectrum of the comedic palette – the debunking power of dark humor, social satire, regional caricature, farce, and clichés from the judicial thriller – are channelled in a nonmoralist but, as Germi intended, supremely ethical commentary on Italian miseries.

Self-reflexivity in Italian cinema of the 1950s and the 1960s is also synonymous with ironic, 'soft' commentaries about Italy's own *société du spectacle*, as well as a general disenchantment with cinema – and melodrama, as in Visconti's *Senso* (1950) – as a medium that goes from epistemological tool to simulacrum obstructing knowledge and eternalizing ideology. Reflections on the use of the medium are carried out at a somewhat occasional level, often in experimental and isolated pieces, such as Rossellini's *Illibatezza* (1962). In spite of sometimes being considered little more than a frivolous trifle in Rossellini's filmography, as Peter Brunette wrote, 'it is perhaps through this willed frivolity that certain ongoing aesthetic and epistemological themes can more easily surface.'[103] *Illibatezza* is part of the four-sequence film *RoGoPaG* and tells the story of Anna Maria, an Alitalia hostess stalked by a nagging American wooer who stops pursuing her only when Anna Maria is advised by her psychiatrist to change her appearance from a chaste and virginal Madonna-lookalike to an aggressively erotic and castrating beauty. By the end of the episode, the generic American Joe can only try to hug and hold Anna Maria's image while the amateur films he had shot earlier are being projected on a wall. After taking into account the illusory agency of the image in *La macchina ammazzacattivi* (1952), by splintering a supposedly whole and coherent reality into a multiplicity of layers, Rossellini distances himself from 'the naïve realist aesthetic of the neorealist movement'[104] and engages with the epistemological complexity of representation. It is an aesthetics of struggle prefiguring the world of Antonioni, whose neurotic characters are in an ever-present state of shock, constantly out of sync with a time that cannot be appropriated.

Case Studies. Filmmakers Debate Neorealism and the National Tradition

The debate on the truest vocation of Italian cinema involved the most prominent cineastes and intellectuals. The reflections of Giuseppe De Santis, Luigi Chiarini, and Cesare Zavattini on the new Italian cinema clarify the leap from the previous mode of production and show the dynamic and hybridized nature of the realisms to come, announcing many a tendency of the emerging national cinemas and transitioning into postmodern articulations. One may say that their trajectory – the implementation of groundbreaking ideas generated by a furious scholarly debate during the Fascist years – is that of a new wave sui generis. One of the most stimulating contributions, that of Antonio Pietrangeli, will be analyzed in depth in the next chapter.

Giuseppe De Santis: Collectivity, Landscape, Postmodern Realism

The question of the role of the landscape in the path toward a new 'identity image' has been present in the proto-Neorealist debate since 1941. One of the few auteurs to posit a methodological question in forthright terms, De Santis was at first a film reviewer who, with Antonio Pietrangeli, inaugurated the journalist-to-become-director trend in Italian cinema. De Santis, together with Luchino Visconti, had the abrupt irruption of destitute classes on the stage of official, high art as one of his goals. In his 'Per un paesaggio italiano,' De Santis discusses the function of landscape in romantic, symbolic ways, arguing that the key concept for a successful, true, and genuine Italian cinema is one of participation. De Santis names some works by Alessandro Blasetti (who made the only truly apologetically Fascist film with a popular character, *Vecchia guardia*, 1934) and Mario Soldati, together with Walter Ruttmann's *Acciaio* (1933), as the best representatives of a cinema where figurative motifs of the landscape and interior motivations of the actors evoke a more authentic atmosphere, properly reconstructing the illusion of the world where people live and work. According to De Santis who, as Ruberto and Wilson noted, could be considered a thinker along the lines of Gramsci even before the popularization of Gramsci's work,[105] the unparalleled master is Jean Renoir, whose attention to reality and to the landscape has forged an unrivaled craftsmanship when it comes to associating surroundings and human feelings: 'It would seem that Renoir wants to point out the existence of feelings which men cannot express; therefore, it is necessary to use everything around him to express those feelings.'[106] Through De Santis, Renoir's influence will get to the 'most French' of Italian filmmakers, Antonio Pietrangeli. Even though De Santis did not explicitly posit the distressing disconnect between man and landscape, integral to late modernist cinema, it is not too provocative to state that the filmmaker

theorized a new phase in the evolution of the medium that would be translated globally; for instance, by Satyajit Ray when showing Apu running through menacing cityscapes or by French directors of the Nouvelle Vague – like Jean-Luc Godard, Agnès Varda, and Jacques Rivette – using Paris as a metaphorical space of loss, often unwelcoming if not dystopic. De Santis' landscape, from *Ossessione* onward, where he worked as Visconti's assistant and was instrumental in incorporating scenes from peasant life and other background events, will turn into Deleuze's any-space-whatevers which, rather than furnishing an action–reaction dynamic and reinforcing a logical narrative, acquire their own autonomous meaning.

Another question of major interest is the tormented relationship that De Santis and other theoreticians of Neorealism had with the role of literature in film. This issue can be better understood by contrasting the two major trends explored in the debate. On the one hand, there is a tendency to dismiss the importance of literature when it comes in the disguise of intricate plots with tangled events. As we know from the words of Zavattini, such narrative heaviness was perceived as deceitful, looking for illusory attractions instead of focusing on the ever-surprising facts unfolding in front of our eyes. As Zavattini wrote in his memoirs, he almost paradoxically sought to free his literary self from literature, and to experiment with formal devices through which to gain access to the original, revealing dimension of man. Through compassion and a quasi-surrealist approach, Zavattini was processing reality and giving it back with a sentiment of astonishment and wonder, exasperating the absurd side of language and conjuring up bizarre characters with improbable names. By exploiting the rifts and fissures of language, Zavattini was thus able to destroy the illusory soundness of the well-adjusted, integrated person and to expose the absurdity of specific socio-economic processes geared to make sure that the poor would remain in their place. Consequently, he brought to light rituals of exploitation and pauperization, finding the egalitarian roots of people and condemning the arbitrary and dehumanizing logic of discrimination. De Santis was similarly interested in exposing such practices of exploitation, yet at the same time he felt a strong and well-documented urgency to return to what was perceived as good literature; namely, to the Italian realist tradition and to the verist Giovanni Verga in particular. Verga was seen as the first Italian intellectual capable of answering the demand for a less mediated artistic experience. The formal devices he adopted – a verbal mixture where dialectal words, colloquial iterations, and deformed intonations skillfully reproduced the immediacy of real, in-context conversations; the seamless adoption of different points of view, and the use of a distant, 'receded' narrating technique to leave characters at the center of the stage – were perceived as a potential literary equivalent of Neorealist devices. At the same time, however, other components of Verga's writing – his potential for idealist and Marxist readings; the lyrical,

almost decadent aestheticization of some aspects of the peasants' life, as well as the enthusiastic judgment pronounced by Croce suggest that it was not De Santis and Alicata who chose Verga; rather, the choice of Verga is almost the byproduct of the episteme of the time. One might even argue that the intrinsic conservatism of Verga would serve appropriately for a movement that has left many sections of life – family, industrialization, the role of media – relatively untouched. There were many risks of looking at Verga as a supposed initiator of a realist trend in modern Italian art. Verga started as a scandalous writer of prurient situations with 'fallen' women living lives of sin: the intended public of his first novels *Storia di una capinera*, *Eva* and *Tigre reale* was the Milanese aristocracy. Verga can be held as the Italian correspondent for the decadent cry *épater le bourgeois*. Unlike Capuana, his verist works are depurated of the erotic element but still reflect the look of a writer primarily involved in making a spectacle of his artistic matter. From this standpoint, adopting Verga as a model of realistic and compassionate representation complicated things. The morbid interest in the barbarization of poor people, the scopophilic attention given to low-lifes and wretched individuals is reflected throughout the Neorealist period and is one of the primary reasons for its success abroad, especially in the United States. By adding this instance of spectacularization to some of the most celebrated features of Neorealism – open endings, anecdotal pace, shooting on mostly 'exotic' locations, nonprofessional actors, fragmented (dis)continuity, a documentary feel for the material and, in general, working in poor conditions, but above all critical reception and marketability more successful and enthusiastic abroad than in Italy – the doors are opened for the shockumentaries of the 1960s, like *Mondo Cane*, and for contemporary reality shows. The trajectory of Luchino Visconti's growing disenchantment is exemplary: the 'woman of the people' played by Anna Magnani in *Bellissima* is still a vibrant force driving a corrosive comedy with whom one can sympathize, but the trajectory of personal enlightenment is achieved in spite of cinema and not because of it.

The article 'Verità e poesia: Verga e il cinema italiano,' written by De Santis in collaboration with Mario Alicata and published in the journal *Cinema* in 1941, is an example of the backwards movement in film history to subreptitiously demonstrate the intrinsic realist nature of cinema. Showing an erudite film culture the audience will appreciate in *Riso amaro*, yet squeezing different tendencies and schools into a single, loose realist category, De Santis isolates realistic moments in the works of some of the major filmmakers – from King Vidor to Ewald André Dupont to Marcel Carné, to name a few – in order to bend them to a definitive assumption: the best cinema is realistic, and must stay realistic, because cinema is a narrative medium. But that which De Santis is looking for in Verga (and Alessandro Manzoni) is not architectural narrative but a form of attention to reality capable of transmitting the state of affairs of

an entire world in a given moment of time while becoming an artistic tradition. His wariness – and Zavattini's – of filmmaking from books is the same as Truffaut's impatience for finally breaking with the custom of period costume films.

In an answer to a critical reception of the article on Verga, De Santis elaborates that all-embracing, unsparing aesthetic proposition typifying the discussion on Neorealism. He blames the emphasis on lyrical elements in cinema on the author of the critical piece, Fausto Montesanti, as well as his vision of art as a group of technically different domains: 'almost as if acknowledging the unity of the arts had not been the simplest but the most accomplished conquest of modern artistic consciuosness, and he [Montesanti] mixes the autonomy of the means of expression with the autonomy of poetry.'[107] These words, imbued with idealism – as already noted by Tinazzi – could very well have been written by Benedetto Croce himself, implying the distinction between poetry and non-poetry that De Santis makes just few lines after. Then he comes to the hieratic finale:

> More than anybody else, we want to take our camera on the streets, in the fields, ports, factories of our country: we are deeply convinced that one day we will make our most beautiful movie by following the slow and tired pace of a worker returning to his home, telling the bare poetry of a new and pure life enclosing in itself the secret of its aristocratic beauty. Perhaps it is for that, and only for that, that we cleared our table from the cheap fiction where other skeptical and listless bourgeois types want to get their daily grammar, and instead we strove to pursue the gestures of more primitive and truer creatures in the free, fantastic landscape of our literature: the tragic and desperate eloquence of Master 'Ntoni Malavoglia, the silent and tragic sacrifice of Luca, the dejected and conscious one of 'Ntoni son of Master 'Ntoni, and savage and wild innocence of Jeli the Shepherd.[108]

Dismissing the persistency of avant-garde and symbolist filmmakers and poets as obstacles to the emergence of inspirational narratives, and labeling their technique as self-referential technicality, De Santis outlines the development of American cinema as a situation comparable with Italy's cinematic tendencies. Just as the crisis of American society gave birth to the realism of the King Vidors and the Rouben Mamoulians of *City Streets* (1931), Italy is ready to give voice to the Italian landscape one finds so well represented not only in the pictorial tradition but in literature as well, by Verga and Leopardi. And again, just as gangster movies can be ascribed to economic depression, and social mobility, French realism is likewise seen by De Santis as a direct consequence of a deeper look into people's privations and troubles.[109]

> It is necessary to make clear – De Santis and Alicata say – that the cinema finds its best direction in the realistic tradition because of its strict narrative nature; as a matter of fact, realism is the true and eternal measure of every narrative significance – realism intended not as the passive homage to an objective, static truth, but as the imaginative and creative power to fashion a story composed of real characters and events.[110]

De Santis and Alicata see a fruitful parallel between what they name as the influence of Zola and French naturalism on Duvivier, Carné, and Renoir, on the one hand, and the birth of an Italian national cinema with Verga as its tutelary deity, on the other. Accurately picking among Italian works the ones that seem to corroborate their demand for moral commitment and nonrhetorical topics, they elevate *Sperduti nel buio* (1914) by Nino Martoglio[111] and *Rotaie* (1929) by Mario Camerini to the rank of exemplary, almost heroic efforts in the midst of rotting, decadent divertissements and the *Biedermeier* era of Italian romantic comedies. The finale is simply an offer Italian cinema cannot refuse: Verga is highly necessary because his works offer 'both the human experience and a concrete atmosphere' so that Italian cinema will be able 'to redeem itself from the easy suggestions of a moribund bourgeois state.'[112]

In 'Il linguaggio dei rapporti,' a critical decimation of the shallowness plaguing contemporary Italian cinema, De Santis invokes a general democratization of cinema without stars and prima donnas, and democratization of the shot with all the actors on the same spiritual level and with 'natural' objects rendered as essential parts of the scene. It is a blend of romantic ideas and cues that sound already Zavattinian. Also Zavattinian is the mystic belief in a distinct and eternal vocation of the nation and consequently of Italian cinema, expressed with a definitive tone: 'Nobody cares more about spiritual interests than our people.'[113] Giulia Fanara summarizes the critical production by Alicata and De Santis:

> In the writings of Alicata and De Santis there is a greater emphasis, that is the sense of an ideological battle that will continue for the former in the political field, for the latter in the incubation of an idea of cinema that, from the very first work, will develop a specific project: by looking at the narrative modules taken from popular culture (photostories, penny dreadfuls, Hollywood cinema), it will strive to translate, albeit personalizing them, some of the Gramscian principles, first of all the one regarding national and popular culture.[114]

Finally, in 'È in crisi il neorealismo?' – a late defense written in 1951 – De Santis does not dismiss the importance of Neorealism's success in international markets and, at the same time, emphasizes its truly national and identitary

character, stemming from the representation of Italy's new motor: simple people who were the protagonists of the Resistance and now are trying to liberate themselves from the condition of being 'insulted and humiliated.' According to De Santis, if filmmakers want to protect Neorealism from extinction, the only feasible path is 'to go beyond exposing and adopt history's inexorable pace, the same that their characters are invoking in order to advance, to go on and to expand the struggle against social injustices.'[115] The emphasis was always on the value that was going to be lost and on the abrupt interruption of the global cultural and educational project, as theorized by the line De Sanctis-Gramsci-Croce:

> One of the most tragic aspects of the current crisis in Italian cinema is not that it might suddenly make thousands of workers jobless. It is that it could deprive the Italian people of the instrument it has itself struggled for and won: cinema. It is now indispensable to a people in order for them to know themselves, to criticize the negative aspects of their lives, and to educate themselves toward a higher concept of liberty.[116]

In the same article, De Santis insists on the apolitical sensibility of the filmmakers restrained from working, cautioning against the loss that a restoration in film would represent for a country in transition. The most interesting passage is probably the one on Blasetti's *Fabiola* (1949). Elsewhere hurriedly dismissed as a vulgar peplum, thus confirming the true nature of Blasetti, here it is praised for the 'warning which solemnly arises from the people.'[117]

In his press releases De Santis sometimes sounded like a mediocre Soviet cineaste with some quirky traits, à la Grigorij Aleksandrov, and he often fell for hackneyed stereotypes: in *Italiani brava gente* (1964), the chronicle of the failed invasion of the Soviet Union, Italian soldiers look like figurines with impeccable regional accents and a weak spot for generic class solidarity. However, as early as 1950 with *Non c'è pace tra gli ulivi* De Santis, like Visconti, had already reconfigured Neorealist clichés into an abstract, metacinematic language as noted by Zagarrio:

> De Santis's in-camera editing is 'anti-Bazinian': it is manipulative – not necessarily in the negative sense of the term – anti-naturalistic, self-reflexive – delightfully declaring the presence of the camera, using elements of the landscape together with escamotages, synthetizing the narrative, emphatically insisting on details already described by the voiceover.[118]

One may say that De Santis proves to be a revolutionary theoretician who appears somehow resistant to fully incorporating his intuition into his

own pictures. In his later works he seemed content with an ideologically overcharged approach, which meant that the movies did not age very well. Nonetheless, De Santis' use of time is as experimental as Rossellini's: in *Roma ore 11* he manipulated time as a solid duration symbolizing the entrapment of women in classified roles. He went even further with experimentation with *Riso amaro* where he created a brand of realism that often feels postmodern thanks to a critique of popular media shamelessly turning into fascination. He also took the science of shot composition to unparalleled heights: for example, in *Riso amaro*, he opened sequences with elements reinforcing the *noir* subplot and ended them with cinematic 'sema' taken from the popular milieu, or he did the opposite while at the same time allowing the audience to immerse itself in the landscape, creating the type of elaborate conceptual constructions that have become customary in art cinema.

Luigi Chiarini and the Question of Art Cinema

The issue of 'quality' and the problematization of the cinema-versus-industry relationship resurface in the position of Luigi Chiarini.[119] His task is to find a plausible loophole from the fast declining production of the early 1950s and provide theoretical grounds for rescue. Chiarini classifies movies into roughly two categories. On the one hand, some movies display spectacle in the proper sense, targeted to big audiences, with its paraphernalia of fancy costumes, lavish cinematography, ingenuous plots, and nonthreatening conventions; on the other hand, there is the pure film, looking for no such mediations like those mentioned above, and seeking to establish a virginal, pristine relationship with reality by pursuing uncompromising allegiance to the photographic document. Deviations from Neorealism are labeled as 'a process of involution into a mannerism without soul and therefore without bite.'[120] The spontaneity of the Neorealist movement is clear for Chiarini. He understands that Neorealism did not address specific stylistic problems, at least consciously, and was born as a response to what Neorealist filmmakers thought were the new spiritual needs of the nation. The scholar dismantles all the simplistic, mechanic elevation to inspirational sources of previous realist moments in film and literary models such as the aforementioned Verga. For Chiarini, this common sentiment that is Neorealism, this break with the tradition

> springs from a sincere need for truth and humanity after so much suffering, from a need for pure air painfully acquired during the war and the foreign occupation which had made the individual drama (of a psychological order) dissolve into a collective drama. It developed in us the incentive to begin a social inquiry so that we could discover the causes of so many evils and so much pain.[121]

It is a hybridized realism, fraught with 'liberal and humanistic rhetoric.'[122] The prescriptive nature of Chiarini's criticism and its hopeful emphasis on renewal and social progress are evident in his own pursuit of illustrious predecessors advocating realist practices in the arts. Chiarini enlists no less than Francesco De Sanctis, who in 1871 authored a volume that is considered the first modern history of Italian literature. Alberto Asor Rosa defined Francesco De Sanctis's cultural proposition a 'model of all-embracing cultural initiative'[123] an elaborated, systematic project echoing Gramsci's words on the necessity of a radical renovation of culture for Italy. Besides the emphasis on the observation of Italian habits and behaviors as a mandatory means to renovate Italian literature, and his idea of realism as an antidote against fossilization and literary Arcadia, Chiarini's appropriation of De Sanctis was tempting for two reasons. De Sanctis' conception of art as a dissolution of concept into form, later mediated and developed by Benedetto Croce, was soon to become overwhelmingly popular in Italy and unmatched by any other theory of beauty; De Sanctis was also the first Italian intellectual of the modern era to establish himself with unprecedented authority as a guide in the field of literature, annotating the history of Italian writers with comments and remarks on the intrinsic value of works, in a manner where it is sometimes very hard to tell the erudite philosopher apart from his ethical and personal concerns.[124] For the *intellighenzia* of postwar Italy one of the lines of fire was the conflict between the 'value' of a film and its potential as a moral vehicle versus its pure enjoyability. The emphasis on moral motivation derived from the momentum generated by the end of the conflict, when instances of renewal were extremely pressing and urgent. The speculation on value is the consequence of the unprecedented success that Benedetto Croce's theory of aesthetics acquired in Italian culture. For Croce, true art is a joining of lyric intuition and expression, an active mental process when the artist finds the proper sounds, images, and colors. Croce was resolute in saying that art could not have any ethical or heteronymous purpose, but apparently his theory was malleable enough to be contaminated by some generic humanism, a recurrent problem that perhaps has to do with the most sentimental aspect of Catholicism. Croce's ideas of art as pure intuition and a mode of knowledge that does not falsify or corrupt the real transpire in the entire discussion on Neorealism, specifically in the speculation of Zavattini, with his emphasis on the individual nature of the production of the work of art, and with the ultimate goal of Neorealism as a movement that will limit and possibly remove the tyranny of financial and technical elements,[125] an idea of art that exists only for its own sake, miraculously disconnected from broader political and industrial considerations, a transcendental idea of creation existing outside contingency. Intellectuals like Croce and Gramsci who transcended their ideological formation to postulate cultural revolutions of national extent all found place in the PCI's cultural pantheon;

that is, a heterogeneous collection of positions showing that after all the PCI was tightly connected to the main lines of national thought and therefore politically legitimized. For example, even though Gramsci and Croce had completely different ideas on the popular nature of Risorgimento, the official PCI historiography had no problems at all in melding those two positions in an optimistic gradualism, teleologically leading to a greater involvement of the people in the subsequent history of the country. Claudio Milanini summarizes the process of establishing a totalizing, teleological historicism through the concept of realism:

> The reference to the category of realism – already received problematically by the greater part of European Marxism, at least from Lenin's formulation of the reflexion theory – became then more rigid in the pursuit of normative rules; hence the general tendency to estrapolate a number of cues and theories immediately usable in a militant perspective from the texts of Gramsci and Lukács.[126]

Chiarini believes that with Neorealism cinema has evolved from naturalism to a dialectical movement between the human beings in a specific historical moment and the socio-economic conditions in which they live: '[F]ar removed from hypocrisy and rhetoric, it has rediscovered the concrete values of the homeland, of liberty, work, and family,'[127] a statement that sounds more like a policy document than a dispassionate observation because themes like family remained mostly unscathed in Neorealist analysis. Chiarini's alignment of past facts proceeds in two directions: the Italian precedents such as the infamous *Sperduti nel buio*, Rossellini's *La nave bianca* (1942), and Francesco De Robertis' *Uomini sul fondo* (1942); and, furthermore, the many currents of international realisms that, more advanced stylistically and for this reason more mediated, gave way to the Italian Neorealism and its revealing sincerity achieved with an extreme poverty of means. Stitches come off the sutured shots: spectators feel estranged and displaced in a collective experience engendering a true, albeit traumatic, immersion into authenticity, as if we were all witnessing the birth of the mental image:

> During the projection of the film – Chiarini writes about *Roma città aperta* – the audience no longer sees the limits of the screen, does not sense a skilful artifice, and no exclamations are uttered about the virtuosity of the director and actors. The images have become reality, not seen with lucid detachment as in a mirror, but grasped in their actuality and very substance. The formal presence of the film-makers has dissolved in that reality.[128]

An aesthete like Chiarini, director of some of the most representative 'calligraphic' movies, that is, rich with formally convoluted shots, was a sharp critic of stylistic sloppiness. Thus, after the usual anathema against formalism and movies made for exclusively commercial purposes, the scholar dissolves the significance of Rossellini's work into an unspecified social category: 'Cinema which itself is comprised of a collective soul is the best means for the expression of the collective soul called society.'[129] Chiarini hails *La terra trema* as the birth of an image invested in the formation of identity, an example of formal perfection where the dignity of man is preserved and exalted like never before. Chiarini has a hard time reconciling the different tendencies one finds in film production of the late 1940s and early 1950s: he bashes Augusto Genina's *Il cielo sulla palude* (1949), works by Renato Castellani, and the Ingrid Bergman phase of Rossellini, who established the foreign woman as 'an unjustifiable and gratuitous character.'[130] Neorealism, Chiarini says, has lost momentum and motivations and has turned into a generic naturalism: one can use nonprofessionals, shoot on location, and portray a disturbing atmosphere in pure verist terms, but its aesthetic decadence has irredeemably taken place. Causes can be found in changing socio-economic conditions, Chiarini concedes, but the main reason is the abandonment of that authenticity, of that faith in the role of film as vehicle of knowledge that has caused the death of Neorealism. Almost contradicting himself, he expands on the lack of appropriate financial mechanisms ensuring decent production levels, at the same time stressing that one of Neorealism's major strengths was its independence from political parties or socially recognizable points of view hindering its polemical force:

> [C]ensorship, the system of state prize money; political struggle becomes embittered, provoking factionalism and excess. Criticism fails to support the best works in the cinema and fails in all the other constructive ways by which it is possible to influence production. Yet production should be directed, even under a libertarian regime.[131]

Chiarini also indicates different ways to renovate the sacred tenets of Neorealism, selecting four works by Rossellini (*Francesco, giullare di Dio*, 1950), Pietro Germi (*Il cammino della speranza*, 1950), Antonioni (*Cronaca di un amore*) and De Sica (*Miracolo a Milano*, 1951). Each film seems to him rather a deviation than a fruitful development. Chiarini's praise goes to the unmediated dialectics of *Miracolo a Milano*, warning at the same time that the weakest parts of this work are the one where Zavattini and De Sica opt for explicit fairy-tale, borderline sci-fi solutions and depart from the reality of the poor and the arrogance of the rich. Chiarini holds his position with admirable coherence: he has marked off the heroic period of Neorealism as the most appropriate cultural proposition for the transitional period Italy was facing,

and he stubbornly and nostalgically seeks to ward off further distractions from something which, he admits, is already dead. In his last article on this topic, while providing with the usual insight very concise, functional yet extremely sharp definitions of Neorealism,[132] his lexicon fluctuates between terms like 'betrayal,' 'deviation,' 'appeasement,' 'negation' and 'conciliation': cinema is understood as a tool capable of uprooting a deep structure layered in reality, an instrument of epistemological change, a medium capable of granting new agency.

Cesare Zavattini: History, Agency, Truth

If one may agree with Lyotard that Neorealism was not revolutionary in the sense that it did not subvert the principle of the image as the realm of 'libidinal normalization,'[133] effacement of asperities and exclusion, yet at the same time it tested the ethical potential of the medium through its emphasis on the encounter, on the witnessing of traumatic historical events, on its obsession with the national 'spirit.' Neorealism was an attempt at founding a new solidarity, and a new people:

> Art, and especially cinematographic art, must take part in this task: not that of addressing a people, which is presupposed already there, but of contributing to the invention of a people. The moment the master, or the colonizer, proclaims 'There have never been people here', the missing people are a becoming, they invent themselves, in shantytowns and camps, or in ghettos, in new conditions of struggle to which a necessarily political art must contribute.[134]

Speaking at the Conference on Neorealism held in Parma in 1953, Cesare Zavattini said that one of the tasks of the movement was to make filmmakers responsible for change and that, in his opinion, the natural trajectory of Neorealism was from the false and artificial to the real, granting the opportunity of signification to everybody. This declaration is extremely important because it represents an attempt to salvage a national tradition from outside threats during the harshest years of the cold war. For Zavattini, signification is not exclusively a question of agency, but of granting decent life conditions and dignity to every citizen; hence, his frequent romanticization of the poor and eccentric people. 'Its [reality's] ear and eye' – he said in his presentation – 'are made to welcome the instance of all the men who want to be present, not only in cinema, with their first and last name, men who want to be known.'[135] According to Zavattini, such reality is infinitely plentiful, multifaceted, never ordinary, and expects to be respected and obeyed, at the expense of the generic entertainment provided by cinematic conventions; it commands a different

movement, a flux proceeding toward the director, whose task it is to facilitate the intense flow of truth which promanates from the scene.[136] In Zavattini's system, cinema 'does not subjugate the real to a fragmentation functional to narrative purposes, but retains its unpredictability and the horizon of possibility.'[137] His radical ideas were often domesticated by Vittorio De Sica or rejected by producers, but Zavattini's stance of empowering people through cinema is one of the principles at the base of the new waves:

> Like Bazin, Zavattini considered the 'moral impulse' of the everyday event, defamiliarized in its 'longest and truest duration' . . . In fact Zavattini posits techniques of interruption, repetition and dilation against assembly-line capitalist modes of film production, thus harnessing a new cinematic temporality and an assertive, revolutionary appropriation of the site of action.[138]

Because reality is rich enough to fascinate an audience and convey a truth, there is simply no need for writing expertise capable of conjuring up contrived situations and artificial characters, also because the new poetics of the event shall be conveyed 'without imposing a hierarchy dictated by rules of narrative that require the rejection of material not directly narratively functional.'[139] A logic plot with conventional twists and turns would divert attention from the object of the cinematic inquiry, which needs to be supported, cherished, and loved, in the acceptance of such a term that Gilberto Perez associates with the Christian *agape*.[140] For Zavattini, Neorealism is at the same time the aesthetics of respect and moral commitment toward the insulted and injured of the world. The coherent conclusion of this philosophical approach to the objects of representation is his poetics of *pedinamento* – rendered in English as 'shadowing' or 'tailing' – which consists of following a 'simple' man on the streets, and humbly letting his life dictate to the director the events of the film. Extreme conditions of poverty, unemployment, and other social diseases, Zavattini says, cannot be improved if those realities are not explored and known extensively, and that moral imperative must be one of Neorealism's functions as a paradigm of knowledge.

Zavattini stubbornly adopts a moral position whose ultimate ambition is to touch the very conscience of every spectator, his behavior and conduct. Mino Argentieri writes: 'If the expressions of art and social communication do not improve mankind, if they do not enhance critical knowledge and critical dialogue, they show their weakness irrespective of the talent and ingenuity used for that.'[141] He is candid and sharply straightforward about his poetics: 'I and my collaborators accept the hypothesis, the illusion if you like, of the possibility for art to help us know things, enlighten them in all of their planes, not only in their harmonious and shapely facets – art as opposition, as provocation,

as knowledge of a city, a social category, a man.'[142] Giorgio De Vincenti went so far as linking the innovative practices of social inquiry carried out by Zavattini to the concept of participant observation in anthropology as coined by Bronislaw Malinowski,[143] and also Carmelo Marabello mentioned the 'ethnographic practices of shadowing'[144] as a type of art ready to depart from the entertainment field. Although such a comparison could seem overstretched and hasty, it has the important merit of pointing to the ethical and methodological problems arising when the various manipulations of the filmic material are at issue.[145] Zavattini himself would speak of 'a participation of presence, for which intuition is exercised on the thing and not on intuition itself, recreating the thing through a series of intuitions.'[146] As in Rossellini, scripts must not be conceived prior to the shooting but during the shooting, a doctrine of acceptance in which facts dictate the rhythm of the film during their natural unfolding in time. In a famous statement, he would compare the nature of the intervention and immediacy of Christ in the midst of events to the potential of cinema as the closest means to represent and recreate reality.[147] A driving force of his speculation is the insistent necessity for knowledge, almost with existential overtones and a marked attention on the metalinguistic implications of his philosophy. Imagining the problematic nature of a long, motionless take of an unemployed man situated in front of the camera, Zavattini poses the question of editing as a treacherous means of escapism, whose function is to prevent the audience from digging into a satisfactory understanding of economic and social conditions:

> Let's put an unemployed man standing still in front of the camera, and then immobilize the audience for five minutes in front of that image projected on the screen. This is not accepted. Somebody will cry 'Editing!', in order for the images to run fast and the understanding by the audience to remain superficial, and for the truth not to be delved into. I said unemployed but I could mention everything requiring urgent measures and for which the duration of our attention is always inferior to the necessity of truly grasping it.[148]

Zavattini equates the use of a story, of a conventional plot, to a death mask artificially pulled down over the overflowing nature of reality, and he states that the 'true' Neorealism is yet to come, considering his works as faltering and unsteady, though necessary, steps in the direction of a pure and liberated Neorealist cinema that will finally reveal life's richness. An implicit reference to timelessness can be heard in Zavattini's words, in the sense that the final discovery will be that of metaphysical truth, the revelation of a less constrained existence for man, as opposed to a forged past of narrative conventionality, when he writes:

> The most important characteristic of neo-realism, that is, its essential innovation, is, for me, the discovery that this need to use a story was just an unconscious means of masking human defeat in the face of reality; imagination, in its own manner of functioning, merely superimposes death schemes onto living events and situations.[149]

Before the actual outbreak of Neorealism one of the topics of the debate on the nature of the new Italian cinema was how to include Renaissance painting and writers such as Verga and Manzoni in an authentic national tradition. Zavattini – himself a prominent painter – carries out the operation mentioned by Calvino, that is, incorporating an avant-garde in the cultural discourse almost without an existing heritage. Manzoni and Verga had done the same by almost creating *ex novo* the historical and the naturalist novel respectively: Zavattini, in his practice of theoretician and scriptwriter achieves or even surpasses the level of sophistication enjoyed by cinema in France, Germany or the United States. Zavattini's Neorealism encompasses not only the Renaissance's 'window on reality' and its 'proxy' experience of depth but goes as far as the cubist avant-garde, where representation is a gnoseological act establishing 'my participation in a Being without restriction, a participation primarily in the being of space beyond every [particular] point of view.'[150] Zavattini's simultaneity shares with Maurice Merleau-Ponty the notion of a 'fluctuating' point of view, where the act of seeing is already thought and things are the prosthetic augmentations of the body, a body that in turn almost erotically (com)penetrates things and the world. According to Zavattini and Merleau-Ponty, the other is not a subject that rivals the self as another subject but there is in fact a transition, a movement, a network that unifies our selves, the world, the others. As Greg Tuck wrote, 'in both painting and film he [Merleau-Ponty] demands the synthesis rather than the separation of object, creator and spectators, a relationship that unites people in the embodied activities of perception, creation and meaning. In both cases his descriptions point back to a shared world where incarnate beings actively engage in these activities such that the relationship between viewer and viewed, creator and object, perceiver and world are mutually productive.'[151] For Zavattini, cinema is the extra sense that can turn such relationships into vital ones. The screen is the place of a culture clash, whose key concepts are disturbance and subversion. The old way of making art has failed miserably; it is now time to abolish the division between the creator of art and the spectator passively receiving the medium. As Argentieri noted in *Lessico zavattiniano*, Zavattini's project is consistent with Dziga Vertov's ambition of turning every Soviet citizen into a camera, and understanding cinema not just as a practice but as a way of life, and again, with no script involved or, better, with story, screenplay, and direction together as a seamless unity, and no barrier between the producer and the

public-turned-producer/filmmaker. The rejection of conventional modules resulted in a peculiar use of narrative episodes, whose function was to exemplify the type of troubles and ordeals one has to go through: to be successful, the project of populating with affections the realm of indifferent landscapes had to be founded on a new idea of time. In the hands of Zavattini and Rossellini, time became a duration open to the unexpected and the unforeseen, reclaiming its integrity as something that cannot be fragmented and rearranged. Rossellini tries to intercept the different, internal rhythms of events with no preconceived ideas: for him and for those who adopted his method, like Zavattini and De Seta, it is possible to speak of camera work as the brushwork of an avant-garde painter, like Picasso 'restarting' a painting with a new stroke, adapting their scripts to reality and not trying to falsify reality by squeezing it into a scenario. As Stefania Parigi wrote, Zavattini wants to transform cinema into the medium capable of catching life in his scandalous, 'flagrant' manifestations: a passionate instrument of knowledge and of affection, where the filmmaker as subject and the objects of the inquiry are mutually connected. Neorealist filmmakers tried to solve two problems: showing Italian people as protagonists of their own history in the very moment as 'master' shifts were taking place and introducing a disjointed and dispersed reality based on an idea of time as an unscratchable surface, prefiguring a qualitative leap in representation, almost as a secular revelation. Zavattini spoke about his works that were most recognizable as fundamentally Neorealist as moments of passage, innovative experiments which nonetheless must not be taken as definitive results but only as compromises before cinema could finally achieve a role as the quasi-epiphanic instrument of liberation. The transition between the original sin of *Ladri di biciclette* or *La terra trema*; that is, the presence of 'un racconto inventato' and the promised land of the 'spirito documentaristico,' was still in the making[152] when Zavattini himself epitomized the problems that Neorealist directors had with the 'weight' of the plot by adapting his own novel *Totò il buono* for *Miracolo a Milano*. In an essay dedicated to *L'amore in città*, Ivone Margulies takes stock of the liturgical lexicon in Zavattini's theoretical works. In Margulies' opinion, the urgency of healing, the task of relieving one's sins in the shape of a father confessor, and the turning of one's back on reality as a betrayal are clear signs suggesting 'that the moral superiority warranted in resistance was continuously mobilized in Neorealist rhetoric but particularly so in the early 1950s,'[153] when the end of Neorealism was perceived as a bitter and painful defeat for its champions. The impossible unity pursued by Zavattini can be inscribed in the debate on the role of intellectuals after the war: even before the Left put into practice its omnipervasive strategy of cultural dictatorship, zealously sold as an unequivocal symbol of its intrinsic superiority, Zavattini had shaped for the intellectual a mediatory role as evangelical facilitator of social cohesion, the artistic

equivalent of a just distribution of wealth. Unconcerned by its Lukácsian 'evolution' toward critical realism, Zavattini rather likened Neorealism to Godardian practices of interruption and recreation, exhalting the anti-naturalistic potential of the medium: his idea of pure facts occupying the scene with their duration as a new, necessary temporality is also the basis of Andy Warhol's cinema. Zavattini's ideas will live on in unexpected forms: his theorization of capturing contingency to render the fissures of a disjointed, cracked reality makes him palatable for avant-garde and underground filmmakers. In fact, a late blossoming of Zavattini's poetics gives Italian cinema one of the most memorable works of its entire history, Alberto Grifi and Massimo Sarchielli's groundbreaking *Anna*, which took to extreme consequences the Zavattinian doctrine of encounter and device of shadowing and Zavattini's idea of 'soggetto pensato durante,' basically 'abducting' a homeless girl from the streets of Rome and assembling a special recording device to overcome technical and financial problems related to the cost and use of film. Moreover, by letting a member of the crew enter the frame in front of the camera and declare his love to Anna, Grifi expanded to unsurpassable extremes one of Neorealism's most radical principles – why only nonprofessional actors and not also nonprofessional directors, crew, and producers? – doing away with preconceived scenarios in an unprecedented fashion, even though *Anna* often borders perilously on sentimentalism, for example when we see a detail of a picture of Sarchielli's son before he puts Anna to bed and discovers scars on her wrists. In Grifi's work, Zavattini's radicalism will be finally taken to its natural consequences, at the same time showing its productivity and the ultimate impossibility of its being carried out as a 'regular' cultural project, in the end almost turning into an exploitation/snuff movie. Other statements of purpose blossomed afterwards in some tendencies of the world's new waves. For example, the detailed account of the economic inequalities and global production counterbalances in the case of the unfinished script about a woman purchasing a pair of shoes for her son, where hints of what some twenty years later will appear in brilliant documentaries by French New Wave second-generation director Luc Moullet; for example, *Genèse d'un repas* (1978): a description of all the exploitation mechanisms and wastes involved in food processing. The vastness of Zavattini's approach could be called epistemic, in the sense that Zavattini is interested in determining all the structural thrusts leading to the fact he describes.

When discussing foreign cinematic traditions, Zavattini charges American films with a sort of human fraud. What Hollywood does is stuck in fossilized representations of reality, leaving an unpleasant, mawkish aftertaste of falsification. Such falseness, he argues, is not possible in Italy because of the overwhelmingly collective character of our lives. This collective character automatically invests subjects with a potential for revelation. It is an anagogic

inquiry, trying to match the verticality of a sacred subject with the humbleness and precariousness of human occupations and earthly deeds:

> In a novel, the protagonists were heroes; the shoes of the hero were special shoes. We, on the other hand, are trying to find out what our characters have in common; in my shoes, in his, in those of the rich, in those of the poor, we find the same elements: the same labour of man.[154]

The utopia is what he calls a cinema of encounter, a Lévinasian form of intercourse with its fresh, intrinsic 'collective awareness' naturally removed from the illusionist nature of an artificial spectacle. In Zavattini's program of social attention, every single person has the potential to educate the spectator with his own experiences, in an epistemological space where knowledge and identification are the same thing, and together open an unprecedented glimmer of light on the truth of the human condition. It is a new

> 'poesia morale' whose purpose [is] to promote a true objectivity – one that would force viewers to abandon the limitations of a strictly personal perspective and to embrace the reality of the 'others,' be they persons or things, with all the ethical responsibility that such a vision entails.[155]

It is difficult to subsume the constellation of philosophical and theoretical aspects discussed or merely skimmed by Zavattini into a single concept. The most appropriate one would be probably be the spiritual education of a people, its progressive consciousness rising in the direction of egalitarianism and piety for human frailty and the social vulnerability of the poor. The very idea of 'poverty' is crucial for Zavattini's system: even though the poor lack financial means, they still own a subversive charge, making them the carnival that bursts into bourgeois propriety. The poor are the carnival of the world, 'the true otherness of the world, its unknown, hard to access, naïve, authentic face,'[156] their language knows no metaphors and is the lockpick to strip reality of its fraudulent constructions and open the door of truth. Their imagination is the key to have access to events they have the right to attend just like everybody else. In a fashion typical of the enthusiasm and overambitious impracticability of partisan thought, other aspects, such as the entertaining use of the medium, are mostly dealt with by subtraction, with sweeping statements:

> I am against exceptional persons, heroes. I have always felt an instinctive hate towards them. I feel offended by their presence, excluded from their world as are millions of others like me. We are all characters . . . The term neo-realism, in its larger sense, implies the elimination of technical-professional collaboration, including that of the screen writer. Manuals,

> grammars, syntax no longer have any meaning, no more than the terms 'first take,' 'reaction shot' and all the rest . . . Neo-realism shatters all schemes, shuns all dogmas. There can be no 'first takes' nor 'reaction shots' *a priori*.[157]

One cannot but think about the only work that Zavattini himself directed, and starred in, the hilarious non-film *La veritàaaa* (1982), where the already 80-year-old writer scrambles all over the place playing the role of a madman enunciating his theories and rediscovering the pleasure of the experience with the frenzied dynamism of a Groucho Marx performance (in spite of his intolerance for recognizable actors, he tried to ink Roberto Benigni, who passed on the project because, in his words, 'after you spend some time with Zavattini you turn Zavattinian for the whole day') (quoted in Giusti, *Dizionario dei film italiani stracult*, 917). Indeed, as many scholars have noted, his heroic intransigence rebutting the most vulgar attacks on Neorealism has a humanist but also a religious valence, distinctively Christian in some passages, especially in its attempt to embrace the entirety of mankind and to 'resurrect' its soul on the screen.[158] It is that type of Christian sensibility resembling the urgency and the paroxysm of a Russian *jurodivyj* or *folle in Cristo* – and Zavattini himself reveals that during his first years in Rome he was called *il pazzo*, before he finally accepted to be somehow tamed by the establishment and deliver projects and scripts palatable also for commercial purposes.[159] Even his idea of democracy is resolutely socialist and anti-capitalist: 'Democracy is antithetical to bourgeoisie, antithetical to individualism, antithetical to liberal structure.'[160] Romolo Runcini, in the entry titled 'Intellettuale' in *Lessico zavattiniano*, associates Zavattini with the French writer Henri Barbusse, whose idea of an intellectual is informed with the divine prerogative of giving things and ideas their true names, while understanding the rational design in the history of humankind: 'Scientists, philosophers, critics, or poets – their eternal craft is to establish and put in order the unnameable truth with formulas, laws, and works. They trace the lines and directions, they have the almost divine gift of finally calling things by their name.'[161]

The scope of Zavattini's action of influence – school, print, cinema, television – and his polemic attacks on the gap between historical contemporaneity and the artificial nature of education in public schools, echo Antonio Gramsci's words on the instruments that create consensus and the mission of the intellectual, who has to actively interpret the pleas and needs of the people and become an educator. It is by means of all of those institutions capable of filtering ideas and propagating culture that the intellectual must answer the historical mission and fulfill his potential, using his specialization and offering a vital and passionate presence in society to define new class relationships. Zavattini tries to embrace all the fields where a conquering culture can be produced, carrying out

'a research of those authentically formative and education processes running through society by way of instances not officially taken as 'educational' in the traditional sense.'[162] By the same token, Zavattini is authentically obsessed with the impossibility of writing new 'stories' now that mass behavior has basically codified every possible character and event. His struggle then is to find nonconventional means of expression in order to arrive at the core of the new social changes, and to dismantle the hierarchy of the historical novel and of the feature film, whose structure emphasizes a preconcerted set of protagonists and hides the nature of man in its everyday enfolding.

A genial preacher and provoker,[163] a writer of picaresque stories and Middle Ages *exempla* with titles like 'Poor people are crazy,' Zavattini had great faith in humans as an active source of knowledge, and in cinema as an epiphanic act of Bergsonian intuition, an instance of meaningful revelation in the continuity of everyday life. As in a Christian parable, its potential derives from the flesh of the actor, who sacrifices his body and his experience in order for the audience to be informed with the previously unattainable knowledge of social injustice, economical misappropriations, and political conservatism. His attention to the marginalized is unprecedented and vehemently honest; as Brunetta writes about *Miracolo a Milano*: 'Now departed towards other destinations where "good morning truly means good morning," Zavattini's homeless ideally carry with themselves a huge number of politically defeated men and social groups, to which cinema does not want to grant rights of citizenship anymore.'[164] One of Zavattini's most accomplished theoretical efforts was to disengage film from narrative and spectacular complications, as a clear reaction against what was perceived as theatrical cinema, against the pre-war industry and its pompous display of expensive choreography, with magniloquent but ultimately passive if not totally insignificant actors in the background, whose only function was to transmit and perpetuate a cluster of well-constructed reactionary values. Speaking about Neorealist cinema, Zavattini summarizes: 'This type of cinema brings about a better understanding of reality, our self-knowledge, of our and of others' place in society.'[165] The dark side, one may say, is the demiurgic tendency whereby the anti-*divistic* demolition of mainstream cinema confers on the filmmaker a god-like power in deciding who is worthy of representing the people and other social classes. Also, as seen in *Miracolo a Milano* with the infamous episode of the black man who deliberately erases his color and therefore his identity for the love of a white woman, it is never a good idea to rob the others of their life experiences on the basis of some sort of ethical mandate. The fetishization of the poor and lowlifes can quickly turn into cheap spectacularization, as observed by Mark Betz. Analyzing the popularity of the episodic problem film and Zavattini's shift from pauperist aesthetics to fake shockumentaries à la *Mondo cane* like *I misteri di Roma*, Betz mentions how the Neorealist experience of the world almost encouraged a deterioration of the image:

One of the interesting aspects of this short yet rich section on episode/omnibus film is how insistently it returns to neorealism as a source and influence. The name of Zavattini is omnipresent and it functions as both an influential center from which issues hybrid imitations and a figure of authority whose critical reputation legitimates a discussion of aesthetically low genres like the secret report, the mondo, the sexy documentary. That said, melodrama – and more generally the quotidian, which includes the sexual – haunts Italian neorealism from its inaugural moment, *Ossessione* (1943), through its 'decline' via *neorealismo rosa* to what could be argued is its closing document, the omnibus film *Love in the City*.[166]

Notes

1. Gian Piero Brunetta, *Il cinema italiano contemporáneo: Da 'La dolce vita' a 'Centochiodi'* (Rome: Laterza, 2007), 8.
2. Pio Baldelli, *Roberto Rossellini* (Rome: Samonà e Savelli, 1972), 68.
3. Among the initiatives trying to establish an Italian new wave, in 2011 the Cinémathèque Française hosted a retrospective entitled 'Une Nouvelle Vague Italienne.' The heterogeneous list of movies can be found at http://www.cinematheque.fr/fr/dans-salles/hommages-retrospectives/fiche-cycle/nouvelle-vague-italienne,309.html (accessed April 19, 2012).
4. Christopher Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema: An Aesthetic Approach* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 348.
5. Millicent Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 20.
6. Ibid. 21
7. Ibid. xvii.
8. András Bálint Kovács, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema 1950–1980* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), 16.
9. Noa Steimatsky, *Italian Locations: Reinhabiting the Past in Postwar Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xx.
10. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *Making Waves: New Cinemas of the 1960s* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 114.
11. Lino Micciché, *Cinema italiano: Gli anni 60 e oltre* (Venice: Marsilio, 1995).
12. Brunetta, *Il cinema italiano contemporáneo*, 5. Brunetta recounts the top-down strategy according to which, in the light of the spontaneous and rebellious nature of the new waves that were happening all over the world, a few production companies tried to artificially initiate a wave planned from within the producers' offices by funding an inordinate amount of debut pictures.
13. Gian Piero Brunetta, *Cent'anni di cinema italiano* (Bari: Laterza, 1991), 489.
14. Giacomo Manzoli, 'Zurlini, Pasolini e la Nouvelle Vague Italiana,' in Alberto Achilli and Gianfranco Casadio (ed.), *Elogio della malinconia: Il cinema di Valerio Zurlini* (Ravenna: Edizioni del girasole, 2001), 80.
15. Morreale sees a modernist line in some melodramas of the 1950s, specifically in the works of Antonio Leonviola and particularly in Marcello Pagliero's *La mondana rispettosa* (1952) and *Vergine moderna* (1954) and, before that, even in Giacomo Gentilomo's *O sole mio*, made in 1946. Pagliero made the free-flowing *Roma città libera* in 1946 while Gentilomo directed one of the least traditional

book adaptations in Italian cinema with *I fratelli Karamazoff* (1947). See Emiliano Morreale, *Così piangevano: Il cinema melò nell'Italia degli anni cinquanta* (Rome: Donzelli, 2010).

16. Marcia Landy, *Italian Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.
17. See the chapter 'Gramsci and Italian Cinema,' in Landy, *Italian Film*, 149–80.
18. 'As regards film-making, the neorealist movement did not succeed in elaborating an alternate project, capable of affecting the strict capitalist logic of the three conventional rings production-distribution-business.' In Claudio Milanini (ed.), *Neorealismo: Poetiche e polemiche* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1980), 18.
19. Giulia Fanara, *Pensare il Neorealismo: Percorsi attraverso il neorealismo cinematografico italiano* (Rome: Lithos, 2000), 205.
20. Ibid. 227.
21. Landy, *Italian Film*, 140.
22. Ibid. 15.
23. Alessia Ricciardi, 'The Italian redemption of cinema: Neorealism from Bazin to Godard,' in *The Romantic Review* 97.3.4, May-November 2006, 493.
24. Jaimey Fisher, 'The Figure of the Child in Italian Neorealism and the German Rubble Film,' in Laura Ruberto and Kristi Wilson, *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), 27.
25. Emiliano Morreale, *Cinema d'autore degli anni Sessanta* (Milano: Il Castoro, 2011), 20.
26. Philip Ross Bullock, *The Feminine in the Prose of Andrey Platonov* (London: Maney), 2005, 192.
27. George Toles, 'On a train to the kingdom of Earth: Watching De Sica's children,' in Howard Curle and Stephen Snyder (ed.), *Vittorio De Sica: Contemporary Perspectives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 112.
28. Petri began his career as a pupil of Giuseppe De Santis. On the occasion of his first feature, the psychological thriller with sociological underpinnings *L'assassino* (1961), editor Ruggero Mastroianni declared that 'Elio Petri and I established a whole new rhythm throughout the film and adopted a totally different technique to edit *L'assassino*, just like when Godard was doing the same for his *À bout de souffle*. But we had not seen his film.' Quoted in Paola Pegoraro Petri in collaboration with Roberta Basano, *Lucidità inquieta: Il cinema di Elio Petri* (Turin: Museo Nazionale del Cinema, 2007), 44.
29. Noël Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 244.
30. Roberto Rossellini, 'Due parole sul neorealismo,' in *Retrospettive* 4 (April 1953), 78.
31. An accurate mapping of Neorealism's different tendencies 'from within' is the essay by Stefania Parigi 'Le carte d'identità del Neorealismo,' in Bruno Torri (ed.), *Nuovo Cinema (1965–2005): Scritti in onore di Lino Micciché* (Venice: Marsilio, 2005), 80–102.
32. Giorgio Tinazzi, 'Un rapporto complesso,' in Giorgio Tinazzi and Marina Zancan (ed.), *Cinema e letteratura del Neorealismo* (Venice: Marsilio, 1990), 34. Tinazzi also mentions Zavattini's metaphor of Neorealist cinema as a medium that sticks to problems 'like sweat sticks to skin,' as well as a passage from the introduction written by Italo Calvino to his *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, in which the novelist defines the cultural *temperie* of the time it was written as an 'anonymous voice of the epoch,' almost an epistemic testimony of the fields of force where the rationality and ideas of Neorealism were born.
33. See, for example, the pages that Mira Liehm dedicates to the Neapolitan filmmaker Elvira Notari in *Passion and Defiance: Film in Italy from 1942 to the*

Present (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). The few photograms left of Notari's entire work have a shockingly 'pre-Neorealist' appearance.

34. Ivone Margulies, 'Exemplary Bodies: Re-enactment in *Love in the City*, *Sons*, and *Close Up*,' in Ivone Margulies (ed.), *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 81.
35. Liehm, *Passion and Defiance*, 80.
36. Giorgio Tinazzi notes that Marxist intellectuals like Fortini and Roversi were the first ones to declare explicitly the insufficiency of socio-economic analysis in Neorealist films, in 'Un rapporto complesso,' *Cinema e letteratura del Neorealismo* (Venice: Marsilio, 1990), 34.
37. See the introductory chapter of Morante's most successful novel, *La storia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1995), 5–12. *La storia* was decimated by Pasolini as consolatory and Neorealist, even though according to other readings, for example Giorgio Agamben's, Morante deliberately wrote a populist novel imbued with irony.
38. Giorgio Tinazzi, 'Stile e stili del neorealismo,' in Lino Micciché (ed.), *Il neorealismo cinematografico italiano: Atti del convegno della X Mostra Internazionale del Nuovo Cinema* (Venice: Marsilio, 1975), 253–4.
39. Pierre Sorlin, *Italian National Cinema 1896–1996* (London: Routledge, 1996), 7.
40. Ibid. 89–93.
41. On the role of documentary in Neorealism, and especially of Alberto Cavalcanti at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia see Luca Caminati, 'The Role of Documentary Film in the Formation of the Neorealist Cinema,' in Saverio Giovacchini and Robert Sklar (ed.), *Global Neorealism: The Transnational History of a Film Style* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 52–67.
42. Liehm, *Passion and Defiance*, 112.
43. Eugenio Garin, 'Cronache di filosofia,' in Adelio Ferrero and Guido Oldrini (ed.), *Da Roma, città aperta alla Ragazza di Bube: Il cinema italiano dal '45 ad oggi* (Milan: Edizioni di Cinema Nuovo, 1965), 35.
44. Ennio Bispuri, *Interpretare Fellini* (Rimini: Guaraldi, 2003), 94.
45. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 98–9.
46. Gianfranco Bettetini, 'Realtà, realismo, neorealismo, linguaggio e discorso: Appunti per un approccio teorico,' in Micciché, *Il neorealismo cinematografico italiano*, 120.
47. Ibid. 134.
48. Paolo Bertetto, 'Struttura della ripetizione e restaurazione del verosimile nel cinema neorealista,' in Micciché, *Il neorealismo cinematografico italiano*, 175.
49. Maurizio Grande and Franco Pecori, 'Neorealismo: Istituzioni e procedimenti,' in Micciché, *Il neorealismo cinematografico italiano*, 199.
50. Ibid. 198.
51. Adelio Ferrero, 'La 'coscienza di sé:' Ideologie e verità del neorealismo,' in Micciché, *Il neorealismo cinematografico italiano*, 235.
52. 'I consider my films realist compared with neorealist film.' 'In neorealist film, day-to-day reality is seen from a crepuscular, intimistic, credulous, and above all naturalistic point of view . . . In neorealism, things are described with a certain detachment, with human warmth, mixed with irony – characteristics which I do not have. Compared with neorealism, I think I have introduced a certain realism, but it would be hard to define it exactly'. In Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, 245.
53. Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, 45–6.
54. Irene Berti, 'Mito e politica nell'*Orestea* di Pasolini,' in *Imagines: La Antigüedad*

en las Artes Escénicas y Visuales (Logroño: Universidad de la Rioja, 2008), 115. The scholar criticizes Pasolini's interpretation of the peasant world, noting its mythical idealization and mentioning Italo Calvino's perplexities.

55. Roberto Alemanno, *Itinerari della violenza: Il film negli anni della restaurazione (1970–1980)* (Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 1982) 135. No cultural artifact is off limits, especially after Gian Maria Vian, director of the Vatican daily *L'osservatore romano*, informed us that *The Blues Brothers* is a Catholic movie (*L'osservatore romano*, June 16, 2010).
56. Brunetta, *Cent'anni di cinema italiano*, 304.
57. Fanara, *Pensare il Neorealismo*, 74.
58. Brunetta, *Cent'anni di cinema italiano*, 306.
59. Fernaldo Di Giammatteo, *Storia del Cinema* (Venice: Marsilio, 2005), 267.
60. Pietro Ingrao, in the introduction to Lino Micciché (ed.), *Visconti e il neorealismo: Ossessione, La terra trema, Bellissima* (Venice: Marsilio, 1998) 35. 'La via che veniva tentata con *Ossessione* era quella di una cultura che riqualificasse se stessa in rapporto ad un nuovo soggetto di storia, che era stato riconosciuto attraverso un lungo travaglio, politico e intellettuale, cominciato nella seconda metà degli anni trenta. L'umanità che soffre e spera' era il nome cifrato che alludeva alla classe operaia. Quegli scritti su 'Cinema' erano un aspetto di una lotta, che trovava il suo sbocco culminante nella cospirazione politica.'
61. Lino Micciché (ed.), *Visconti e il neorealismo: Ossessione, La terra trema, Bellissima* (Venice: Marsilio, 1998), 41.
62. Visconti calls it a 'traccia aneddotica,' in Micciché, *Visconti e il Neorealismo*, 41.
63. Micciché, *Visconti e il neorealismo*, 41.
64. Alfonso Canziani, *Gli anni del neorealismo* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1977), 18. Canziani goes even further in actually circumscribing the Neorealist phenomenon by indicating the exact number of movies of Neorealist vision, as mentioned also in Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*.
65. 'Neorealism instead, is already a poetics of the potential man against the real one, in contrast with "power."' Canziani, *Gli anni del neorealismo*, 19.
66. Maggie Günsberg, *Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 96. Günsberg notes how Sophia Loren was never called upon to play parts of liberated women developing a true subjectivity and was always nailed to the cliché of a voluptuous, patriarchally nonthreatening feminine figure of mother, lover, or prostitute in postcard movies perpetuating a reassuring image of Italy as a stable culture in its eternal underdevelopment. The narrative attached to Vittorio De Sica's *Ieri, oggi, domani* (1963) with the three temporal marks representing three stages in the evolution of the Italian woman and of Italy as a nation is not persuasive: Loren's wit is digging into folklore stereotypes and does not seem to resonate with the shifting paradigm of behaviors and codes. The only time Loren was employed for a programmatically modernist picture was for Vittorio De Sica's 1962 rendition of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Les séquestrés d'Altona*, with involuntarily uproarious, but unforgettable, results.
67. Manuela Gieri, *Contemporary Italian Filmmaking: Strategies of Subversion: Pirandello, Fellini, Scola and the Directors of the New Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 202.
68. Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, 22.
69. Sidney Gottlieb (ed.), *Roberto Rossellini's Rome Open City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 39–40.
70. Federico Luisetti, *Estetica dell'immanenza: Saggi sulle immagini, le parole e le macchine* (Rome: Aracne, 2008), 14.

71. Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost: Films and Their Medium* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 134.
72. Vito Zagarrio has explored the continuity between cinema made during Fascism and Neorealism in 'Before the (Neorealist) Revolution,' in Giovacchini and Sklar, *Global Neorealism*, 19–36.
73. First in *Cinema Journal* and now in Carlo Celli and Marga Cottino-Jones, *A New Guide to Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). As for *Ladri di biciclette*, one may argue that Ricci is not looking for the bicycle but for himself.
74. Christopher Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema: An Aesthetic Approach* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 10.
75. Bálint Kovács, *Screening Modernism*, 171.
76. Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, 23.
77. Ibid. 27–8.
78. D. N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 13.
79. Bálint Kovács, *Screening Modernism*, 43.
80. Moinak Biswas, 'The neorealist encounter in India,' in Laura E. Ruberto and Kristi M. Wilson (ed.), *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), 75.
81. Jean Douchet, *French New Wave* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 1999), 154.
82. Maurizio Grande, *La commedia all'italiana* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2003), 52. And on page 242, specifically referring to the films based on scripts written by Age and Scarpelli: 'La commedia cinematografica di Age e Scarpelli coglie il dramma del soggetto moderno su un doppio versante: la sua estraneità al mondo (alla Storia, alla società, alle tradizioni della borghesia, allo sviluppo di un paese 'lontano' dai singoli); il panico radicato dinanzi alle proprie *frustrazioni*, segno di una inadempienza fra mete e risorse, dinanzi alla quale il soggetto oppone una cieca (e perciò comica e tragica) pulsione di vita che porta con sé la distruzione.'
83. From the original script of the film, in Franco Brusati and Francesco Ghedini, *Il disordine* (Roma: Edizioni FM, 1962), 121. 'Certo in Africa era più facile! . . . Laggiù bastava dare, per sconfiggere idoli e stregoni . . . Ma qui! . . . Tutto si complica . . . Non serve più una zuppa o una aspirina . . . Qui ti mettono l'anima in mano . . . E io non ho mai saputo come si fa, a riconoscerle . . .'
84. Annette Michelson, 'What is Cinema?' in *Performing Arts Journal* 17.2–3 (1995), 27.
85. Francesco Casetti, *Teorie del Cinema 1945–1990* (Milan: Bompiani, 1993), 33.
86. Philip Rosen, 'History of image, image of history: Subject and ontology in Bazin,' in Ivone Margulies (ed.), *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 42–79.
87. André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 27.
88. Rosen in Margulies, *Rites of Realism,* 51.
89. In Bettetini, *L'indice del realismo*, 99. 'Un antropologo che tra duemila anni si occupasse dei miti "realisti" della nostra civiltà potrebbe trovarsi nei confronti di questo materiale nelle stesse condizioni che i ricercatori dei nostri tempi sperimentarono nel contatto con la mitologia primitive. Anche il cosiddetto mito realista potrebbe cioè apparire come una modalità di pensiero e di linguaggio legata più ai contenuti ideologici delle nostre società, più ad una mitologia recepita e trasmessa dagli autori che ad una ricerca disponibilmente scientifica nei confronti dell'oggetto.'

90. Giorgio De Vincenti, *Il concetto di modernità nel cinema* (Parma: Pratiche, 1993), 20.
91. Paul Coates, 'European film theory: From crypto-nationalism to trans-nationalism,' in Temenuga Trifonova (ed.), *European Film Theory*, New York: Routledge, 11–12.
92. Salazkina in Giovacchini and Sklar, *Global Neorealism*, 45. The scholar insists on the materialist approach carried out by Barbaro, also in a strategically anti-Crocean stance.
93. Biswas in in Ruberto and Wilson, *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema*, 88.
94. David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 419–20.
95. Ibid. 420.
96. David Bordwell, 'The Art Cinema As a Mode of Film Practice,' in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (ed.), *Film Theory and Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 776. Bordwell explicitly mentions *Ladri di biciclette* as an apparently linear narrative already loosened by uncertainty and draws a temporal arc that goes from Neorealism to pre-1968 cinema.
97. T. J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 405.
98. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Where Silence Reigns: Selected Prose,* trans. G. Craig Huston (New York: New Directions, 1978), 5.
99. Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 5.
100. Now in Jim Hillier (ed.), *Cahiers du cinéma: The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 182–90.
101. Ibid. 183.
102. Enrico Giacovelli, *La commedia all'italiana: La storia, i luoghi, gli autori, gli attori, i film* (Rome: Gremese, 1995), 57.
103. Peter Brunette, *Roberto Rossellini* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 247.
104. Ibid. 250.
105. Ruberto and Wilson, *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema*, 11.
106. David Overbey (ed.), *Springtime in Italy: A Reader on Neorealism* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1979), 126.
107. Giuseppe De Santis and Mario Alicata, 'Ancora di Verga e del cinema italiano,' *Cinema* 130, November 25, 1941, in Callisto Cosulich (ed.), *Verso il neorealismo: Un critico cinematografico degli anni quaranta* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1982), 51. The debate is also revisited by Millicent Marcus in *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism,* 14–18.
108. Giuseppe De Santis and Mario Alicata, 'Ancora di Verga e del cinema italiano,' *Cinema* 130, November 25, 1941, in Cosulich, *Verso il neorealismo,* 63–4.
109. Jean Renoir stood out as the best example to be followed by the new realist Italian cinema De Santis had in mind, mainly because of his uncompromising look into poverty and class struggles, as well as the vivid plasticity of his cinematography.
110. Overbey, *Springtime in Italy*, 131.
111. On the mythization of *Sperduti nel buio* and Verga see Fanara, *Pensare il Neorealismo*, 15.
112. Overbey, *Springtime in Italy*, 135.
113. Giuseppe De Santis and Mario Alicata, 'Il linguaggio dei rapporti,' *Cinema* 132, December 25, 1941, in Cosulich, *Verso il neorealismo* 64.
114. Fanara, *Pensare il Neorealismo*, 223–4.
115. Giuseppe De Santis, 'È in crisi il neorealismo?' *Filmcritica* 4 (1951), now in Milanini, *Neorealismo*, 142.

116. Pietro Germi, 'In difesa del cinema italiano,' *Rinascita* VI, March 3, 1949, and in Overbey, *Springtime in Italy*, 216. A few paragraphs earlier Germi warns of the danger of losing the now painfully established national tradition: If he wants to make a thriller, he says, he will not look at contrived foreign productions; if he wants to tell the story of a cuckold, he will think of De Sica's *I bambini ci guardano*, etc.
117. Giuseppe De Santis, 'In difesa del cinema italiano,' *Rinascita* [1949] now in Overbey, *Springtime in Italy,* 218. De Santis finishes his intervention by putting together the two watchwords of value and global project: 'Then it all exploded with *Roma città aperta*. From that moment, the cinema was able to move forward on a path which has, perhaps, been completely opened, but which has only now become clear. The Italian cinema has discovered a new language, an inexhaustible source of inspiration . . . To smother that ferment would be a crime not simply against Italian, but against world culture,' ibid. 218–19. And Visconti, with a curt stance: 'I am for *quality* [my italics],' ibid. 219.
118. Vito Zagarrio, 'La messa in scena desantisiana,' in Vito Zagarrio (ed.), *Non c'è pace tra gli ulivi: Un neorealismo postmoderno* (Rome: Fondazione Scuola Nazionale di Cinema, 2002), 66.
119. Luigi Chiarini is best remembered as the founder of one of the world's most prestigious film schools, the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in 1935. Chiarini was also a prolific and influential film writer. In 1937, he created the film journal, *Bianco e Nero*. In 1962, he helmed the Venice Film festival, and later returned to academia. Chiarini also wrote scripts – one of his most notable collaborations was De Sica's *Stazione Termini* (1953) – and directed movies such as *Via delle cinque lune* and *La bella addormentata* in the early 1940s, films that are remembered for the formal composition of the shot, aimed at the creation of a cinematic grammar based on the harmonic distribution of landscape and bodies.
120. Luigi Chiarini, 'Discorso sul neorealismo,' *Bianco e nero* XII, July 1951, now in Overbey, *Springtime in Italy*, 139.
121. Ibid. 141.
122. Salazkina in Giovacchini and Sklar, *Global Neorealism,* 46.
123. Alberto Asor Rosa, 'Lo Stato democratico e i partiti politici,' in *Letteratura italiana, Volume Primo, Il letterato e le istituzioni* (Turin: Einaudi, 1982), 675.
124. On the use of De Sanctis, see also Antonio Prete, 'La restaurazione dell'occhio: Materiali per una critica dell'economia politica del neorealismo,' in Micciché, *Il neorealismo cinematografico italiano*, 163–91.
125. See Alberto Asor Rosa, 'Neorealismo o il trionfo del narrative,' in Tinazzi and Zancan, *Cinema e letteratura del neorealismo*, 91, for the paradoxically similar views shared by devotees of Neorealism (like Zavattini) as something still unaccomplished and supporters (like Guido Aristarco) of the 'overtaking' of Neorealism by a poetics of realism.
126. Milanini, *Neorealismo*, 14.
127. Luigi Chiarini, 'Discorso sul neorealismo,' *Bianco e nero* XII, July 1951, now in Overbey, *Springtime in Italy*, 143.
128. Ibid. 150.
129. Ibid. 150.
130. Ibid. 158.
131. Ibid. 161.
132. Chiarini, 'Tradisce il neorealismo,' *Cinema nuovo* 55 (March 25, 1955) and in Overbey, *Springtime in Italy,* 208 and 209. 'Films like *Roma città aperta*, *Paisà*, *Sciuscià*, *Ladri di biciclette*, *La terra trema*, and *Umberto D* . . . possessed in common a new spirit, born from the Resistance, and revealed the fruit of a

deepening (almost a conquest) of cinematic expression in the illumination of a new form,' this form consisting of the following set of replacement rules: '(1) men derived from the audiences' own reality replaced the pre-conceived characters in conventional narratives of the past; (2) the chronicle . . . events and facts culled from the daily existence of men, replaced the prefabricated adventures of novels and comedies; (3) the throbbing photographic document replaced pictorial and figurative virtuosity; (4) the cities and countryside, with people effectively living there, replaced the *papier-maché* scenery of the past;' 'Neo-realism sprang from the inner need to express ideas and feelings which are neither abstract nor schematized, but those suggested by reality itself.'

133. Jean-François Lyotard, 'Acinema,' in Andrew E. Benjamin (ed.), *The Lyotard Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 175.
134. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (London: Continuum, 2005), 217.
135. Cesare Zavattini, 'Il neorealismo secondo me,' previously in *Rivista del cinema italiano* 3 (1954), then in Zavattini, *Neorealismo ecc.*, (Milan: Bompiani, 1979) and in Milanini, *Neorealismo: Poetiche e polemiche*, 179.
136. Even though it probably overestimates the similarities between Zavattini and Vertov, a succinct but exhaustive definition of Zavattini's poetics is presented in Liehm, *Passion and Defiance*, 104: 'Zavattini followed Vertov on three of his main points: his concern with the ontological authenticity of the shots; his belief in the artist's obligation to face reality, without hiding from the facts; and his linking of an aesthetic perception with an ethical and social concern (this third issue being probably the most important).'
137. Paolo Noto and Francesco Pitassio, *Il cinema neorealista* (Bologna: Archetipolibri, 2010), 34.
138. Steimatsky, *Italian Locations*, xxvii.
139. Stefania Parigi, *Cinema – Italy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 14.
140. Perez, *The Material Ghost*, 179. At the end of the war, even though living conditions in Italy were truly catastrophic, one of the recurring themes of the social and economic problems of reconstruction is the perception Italians had of the overall situation of the country, thought to be in even worse condition than it actually was.
141. Mino Argentieri 'Morale,' in Guglielmo Moneti (ed.), *Lessico zavattiniano: Parole e idee su cinema e dintorni* (Venice: Marsilio, 1992), 158.
142. Ibid. 106.
143. Giorgio De Vincenti, 'Modernità,' in Moneti, *Lessico zavattiniano*, 145. Participant observation implies the proximity of the anthropological observer to the group he is studying: Anthropologists live with natives and in many cases go as far as adopting their customs and habits. The goal is the most faithful and transparent observation. On Zavattini as anthropologist and the similarities between Zavattini's ideas and the cinema of Jean Rouch, see also Giorgio De Vincenti, 'Cesare Zavattini: Uomo totale e cinema del frammento,' in *Il concetto di modernità nel cinema* (Parma: Pratiche, 1993), 157–75.
144. Carmelo Marabello, 'Indici di luoghi, materie di immagini, eterotopie possibili,' in Luca Venzi (ed.), *Incontro al neorealismo: Luoghi e visioni di un cinema pensato al presente* (Rome: Edizioni Fondazione Ente dello Spettacolo, 2008), 97.
145. On the ethical problems of participant observation, see I. C. Jarvie, 'The problem of Ethical Integrity of Participant Observation,' *Current Anthropology* 10.5 (1969): 505–8. For a degeneracy of participant observation, see the chapter 'The Napoleonic Wars,' Patrick Tierney, *Darkness in El Dorado: How Scientists and Journalists Devastated the Amazon* (New York: London, 2000).

146. Mino Argentieri in Cesare Zavattini, *Neorealismo ecc.* ed. Mino Argentieri (Milan: Bompiani 1979), 125.
147. Ibid. 175.
148. Cesare Zavattini, Neorealismo, ecc. 118.
149. Cesare Zavattini 'A Thesis on Neo-Realism,' in Overbey, *Springtime in Italy*, 67.
150. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and mind,' in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics* (Evansville: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 173.
151. Greg Tuck, 'Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the in-visible of cinema,' in Havi Carel and Greg Tuck (ed.), *New Takes in Film-Philosophy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 172.
152. The two definitions – 'a story of invention' and 'documentary spirit,' respectively – are in Cesare Zavattini, *Umberto D: Dal soggetto alla sceneggiatura: Precedono alcune idee sul cinema* (Milan-Rome: Bocca, 1953), 16.
153. Margulies, *Rites of Realism*, 224.
154. Zavattini in Overbey, *Springtime in Italy*, 70.
155. Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, 23.
156. Sandro Bernardi, 'Povero,' in Moneti, *Lessico Zavattiniano* 214.
157. Zavattini in Overbey, *Springtime in Italy*, 76.
158. Maurizio Grande, 'Attore,' in Moneti, *Lessico Zavattiniano*, 32. 'Gli uomini, le cose, i rapporti umani sono là, inconfondibili, incontrovertibili, irreparabilmente veri; al cinema spetta il compito di "resuscitarli" e di rivelarne l'anima, nel senso quasi religioso del termine.'
159. Zavattini shares many traits with the old *jurodivyje*: Just like his predecessors, he can be considered an intermediary between popular and official culture, and was definitely somebody not afraid of saying the truth before the 'mighty and powerful.' On the phenomenology of *jurodstvo*, see A. M. Panchenko, D. S. Likhachev and N. V. Ponyrko, *Smech v drevnej Rusi* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1984).
160. Zavattini, Neorealismo, ecc., 409.
161. Romolo Runcini, 'Intellettuale,' in Moneti, *Lessico Zavattiniano*, 114.
162. Attilio Monasta, *L'educazione tradita* (Pisa: Giardini Editori, 1985), 125.
163. The entries 'Cultura' and 'Follia' (with the reference to the Italian version of the *judovyj*, the 'matto beato' or 'blissful loon') in Moneti, *Lessico Zavattiniano* clarify the cultural background of Zavattini, disciple of the Christian Socialism of Camillo Prampolini, of the visionary culture of *naïf* painters, and of the more radical revolutionary instances of his region, Emilia Romagna, historically one of the most left-wing in Italy. If the first influence is especially evident in this overview, the second resurfaces occasionally in Zavattini's life, for instance with his infamous endorsement of terrorists and Red Brigades.
164. Brunetta, *Cent'anni di cinema italiano*, 323–4.
165. Grande in Moneti, *Lessico Zavattiniano*, 34.
166. Mark Betz, *Beyond the Subtitle: Remapping European Art Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 193.

3. THE AESTHETICS EMERGING AFTER THE WAR

The main organizing principles of Italy's emerging national cinema are the determination to construct films as mental images, unlike previous, 'classical' treatments, and to exploit the medium for the investigation, if not the edification, of the national identity. The existential journey seems to be one of the recurring devices used by filmmakers to confirm a state of confusion – national, generational, ideological, 'obsessively presenting tales of narcissistic introspection or of self-evident incapacity, for the 'I' to understand his self and the world.'[1] The wandering of Massimo Girotti in *Ossessione* bears the same destructive purposelessness of Marcello Mastroianni in *La dolce vita*, Sady Rebbot in *Chi lavora è perduto – In capo al mondo* (1963), Steve Cochran in *Il grido* (1957) and Tomas Milian in *Mare matto* (1963), diversifying the use of *flânerie* to textbook perfection before it will be appropriated by Monicelli as the *zingarata*, the exorcism to wander off from responsibility and death, in *Amici miei* (1975). 'Formalists' like Alberto Lattuada and Mauro Bolognini, who seemed destined to the eternal role of 'sidekicks' and footnotes to our celebrated internationalist masters like Antonioni and Fellini, create phenomenal balances between bitter social realism and complex symbolic construction in the extraordinary *Il cappotto* (1952), *Mafioso* (1962), and *Il bell'Antonio* (1960). The new 'fast cars, clean bodies' aesthetics is instantaneously and grotesquely demythologized into a 'wrecked cars, dirty bodies' procession by Marco Ferreri, while Pasolini tries to contextualize the anxiety of the new consumerist society through an ornamental, mythical style. A consummate craftsman like Vittorio Cottafavi, who will later turn to *pepla* and mythologi-

Figures 5 and 6 Bonifacio (Sady Rebbot) updates the aimless fleeing of the protagonist in *Chi lavora è perduto – In capo al mondo* by Tinto Brass (1963, Fig. 5). Documentary images from the Resistance taken from Rossellini's *Paisà* (bottom, Fig. 6) symbolize a fight for freedom that cannot be translated into the conformism of the 1960s.

cal B-movies, realizes the Brechtian *Una donna libera* in 1953, stretching the boundaries of the melodrama and establishing a direct relationship between his style and the uneasiness generated by the constraints of the genre[2] well before the Taviani brothers will dress defamiliarization techniques with political commentary and robust pessimism about Italy's recurring miseries. As mentioned, even genre movies like comedies – Dino Risi's *I mostri*, *Il gaucho*, *Il sorpasso* (1962), and *L'ombrellone* (1965), for instance – are organized as sophisticated conceptual systems with a distinctive modernist aesthetic, not just by virtue of the openness of the image but also for the dissonant use of other media, such as music. In *L'ombrellone*, the partisan hymn *O bella ciao* is reduced to the role of Muzak, just like the jangly pop songs constantly filling the background and preventing the people from exchange of meaningful communication. The failures of the postwar period in terms of values and expectations are perceived as an unescapable burden, a Sisyphus-like condition without an exit strategy.

Modern Italy as Seen by an Older Generation of filmmakers

A neuralgic category is that of directors who are often considered heralds of Neorealism, either in the 'heroic' (Lattuada, De Seta, Germi) or in the 'pink' (Castellani) declination – or its vocal advocates on paper, like Pietrangeli, or in a state of limbo, like Carlo Lizzani – who most urgently tried to free themselves from a bastardized vision of engaged cinema as mainly focused on social content and empowerment of marginal people and searched for a mode of representation capable of expressing the complexities of a country struggling during a radical value overhaul. They created powerful individual stories without relying on industrial molds or genre constraints, often advancing the coordinates of Italian cinema to those of foreign cinematographies. These authors are sometimes only footnotes next to the canonized masters, but they were able to refine their policies of aesthetic representation, switching from canonical Neorealist pictures to highly destructured pieces, a movement one may hold as confirmation of the modernist–realist mélange. A study taking into account the (Neo)realist strategies of representation of failed social redemption earns legitimacy if, as Fredric Jameson writes, we reverse the place of realism in its relationship to modernism, and we think of it 'as a form of demiurgic praxis' trying to understand 'its essential falseness and conventionality.'[3] Therefore, again in the wake of Jameson and Steimatsky, it is supposable to ascertain an almost seamless transition between the realist and the modernist eras for those who began filmmaking right after the war, like Antonioni, Fellini, Rossellini, Visconti, Lattuada, and De Sica, and others who at first experimented with the Neorealist template to exhaust its potential, like Bertolucci, De Seta, Monicelli, and Pasolini, and then moved on to other – identitarian, mythical, symbolic – cinematic imperatives. At that point, the terrain was ready for the other filmmakers to sort of 'plug in' and polish and advance further the motivated, saturated image prevailing in Italian cinema. As an example, by looking at Vittorio De Seta's *Un uomo a metà* (1966), the oneiric trip of a young man revisiting the causes of his psychological breakdown and superimposing his neurotic state on the people and events surrounding him, one could hardly believe that De Seta was the author of the anthropologic study with nonprofessional actors *Banditi a Orgosolo* (1960). Superficially, *Un uomo a metà* may look incompatible with 'transparent' documentaries about Sardinian shepherds and fishermen, exploring the divide between 'archaic' cultures and processes of urbanization and investigating the 'identitarian settlement'[4] of communities caught off guard by Italy's uneven modernization. In *Un uomo a metà*, Jacques Perrin – a baby-faced French actor, who specialized in fragile and insecure types as in Valerio Zurlini's *La ragazza con la valigia* (1961) and *Cronaca familiare* (1962) – is an unrecognizable wanderer engrossed in a painful autoanalysis groping his way through a

Figures 7 to 9 In *Un uomo a metà* (1966), Jacques Perrin traces back the reasons of his passiveness (Figs 7 and 8). The castrating mother (Lea Padovani, bottom, Fig. 9) casts him in the position of spectator and tormented, impotent man.

mindscape of distressing events: a castrating mother; a self-assured, confident brother who then tragically dies in a motorcycle crash; a string of failed loves. His scruffy beard and shabby looks, matched with his tumultuous feelings and unaddressed neuroses, make him more a *maudit* type like Lou Castel, whereas the psychological charge attached to objects and encounters and the cinematic rendition of Freud's principles of condensation and displacement together with symbolically overcharged details and landscapes make the movie resemble works like Alain Resnais' *L'année dernière à Marienbad* and anticipate Bernardo Bertolucci's *Il conformista* (1970). The outstanding

complexity of the shots – emphasis on geometrical details, eccentric takes, alternation between soft and deep focus, use of slow-motion and brusque camera movements – turn the protagonist into a creator whose nightmarish interiority generates memories and ambiences (woods, old dwellings, rivers and streams), putting him on a self-generated theatrical stage where the past runs through the present. Such shots display the same command of the camera and the profilmic as one could expect from a Welles, a Ray, an Ozu. The modernist concept of subjectivity informs the picture with such unmediated brutality that, if one thinks about the bastardization of psychoanalysis carried out by Hollywood, even with its internal play of references and complex commentary on social and cultural encrustations – the Catholic education, the phallic mother – De Seta's movie can be held as one of those new wave works dismantling the boundaries between documentary and fiction.[5]

The hallucinatory chiaroscuro of Dario Di Palma and the rapid, turbulent editing of Fernanda Papa, aimed at conveying Jacques Perrin's sense of desperate ineptitude, make *Un uomo a metà* one of the most 'internationalist,' experimental journeys attempted during the 1960s. De Seta's brilliance is no small feat when Italian cinema was at a crucial crossroads between an exhausted pauperist aesthetics and the Weltanschauung of a middle-high class that often seemed to be the caricature of itself, following that 'Antonioni template' many intellectuals will poke fun at. For instance, novelist Alberto Arbasino, describing with icastic perfidiousness Italy's backwardness, decimated the studied state of neurosis of Antonioni's characters, stating that it was frankly too much to turn into a suddenly rich, stoned-looking Monica Vitti for someone who presumably just the other day was shouting from the stairwell that pasta was ready and *al dente*.[6]

Besides De Seta, other resounding cases are those of Renato Castellani and Alberto Lattuada, artists traditionally confined in the restrictive enclosures of Italian-style comedy and pink Neorealism. Just as Truffaut enjoyed taking shots at André Cayatte, Castellani was one of Pasolini's favorite targets, supposedly being guilty of propagating regressive values, selling them as a 'natural' sense of acceptance, of providing cheesy closures to structural problems that could be solved only with a violent proletarian uprising, and ultimately of belonging to a generation of filmmakers who simply did not have the philosophical preparation to shake bourgeois ideology from its foundations. One may agree and think of the trilogy preceding/instituting pink Neorealism proper, opened by the wistful *Sotto il sole di Roma* (1948), continued by the multiregional comedy (taking place in Florence, Sicily, and Milan) *È primavera* (1950) with touches in the screenplay authored by Suso Cecchi D'Amico and Zavattini, and finally capped by the infamous *Due soldi di speranza* (1952), where even the male protagonist's communist political tendencies are watered down in a *farsa paesana*. However, even the 'nondescript' Castellani gave us

two outstanding works in the second stage of his career. If *Il brigante* (1961) is an epic, robust canvas about peasant struggle in the South conducted with the didascalic touch of Rossellini, and with scenes concerning the formation of class consciousness reminiscent of similar moments of Visconti's *La terra trema*, with *Mare matto* Castellani joined the ranks of filmmakers privileging elliptical narrations, nonclassical editing, and filming freely in the streets. One could maliciously state that the fragmented surface of *Mare matto* should be ascribed to the producer of the movie, who made arbitrary cuts to the massive amount of material Castellani wanted to include in the final version, which in the filmmaker's intentions should have been about three times longer than the one we have at our disposal today. This picture consists of three interwoven episodes 'starring' different ports: Genoa in Liguria, Livorno in Tuscany, and an undisclosed location in Sicily. If the Sicilian portion is rather weak, narrating the story of a young sailor weary of returning home because he wants no part of his sisters' engagement and marital ordeals, complicated by an archaic culture, the other two episodes represent a prodigious development in Castellani's cinematography, making him an unsuspected, bona fide innovator. In Genoa, an unbridledly cynical and dishonest Jean-Paul Belmondo unleashes all of his breezy and erotic vitality on a fantastic Gina Lollobrigida interpreting a bitter spinster whose youth is angrily withering away. In Livorno, a group of Tuscan seamen have their lives and hopes for normalcy shattered by the eccentricities of their old father, an unstoppable braggart, womanizer, and money-squanderer. *Mare matto* does not enjoy critical praise, but the opening sequence depicting a young Tomas Milian – working as an odd character somehow sewing the three stories together – playing a sailor looking for a new job and alternating documentary shots of streets and prostitutes of Genoa with a harsh rant about his derelict condition delivered in his character's Venetian dialect successfully creates a grim and chaotic atmosphere whose truthfulness is light years away from anything Castellani had made up to that point. Even in the most comedic scenes there is always a distant background noise made up of poverty and despair: the dirty interiors seem a metaphysical commentary on human nature; the feelings are destined to come to abrupt ends; only the characters of Belmondo and Odoardo Spataro playing Drudo Parenti, the father of the Livornese seamen, seem capable to face life with some lunatic dignity because of their spirited carelessness. *Mare matto* is a virtuous attempt at merging regional identities – a common thread of the reconstruction years, and one of Italy's most debated issues – through a reinvention of realist aesthetics.

Alberto Lattuada's *I dolci inganni* is even more surprising, especially when one remembers his contribution to Neorealism 'noir' (*Senza pietà*, 1948), choral frescoes in which he depicted laborers as active and passionate individuals, thus exposing the Fascist propaganda of blindly adoring crowds (*Il mulino*

Figures 10 to 12 In *Mare matto* (1963), Renato Castellani tried to move away from his optimistic, exuberant brand of comical realism. Tomas Milian (top, Fig. 10) plays a sailor reflecting on the misery of his job and taking snapshots of the streets (middle, Fig. 11) in a free indirect subjective take. Jean-Paul Belmondo (with Gina Lollobrigida, bottom, Fig. 12) destabilizes the realist approach with his New Wave mannerisms.

del Po, 1949, based on the novel by Riccardo Bacchelli), and Zavattinian portmanteau projects (the segment 'Gli italiani si voltano' in *L'amore in città*). Cinema of feelings at its best, *I dolci inganni*, filmed in 1960, is a delightfully unpredictable series of events centered on the erotic coming of age of Francesca, a teenager 'exploited' by the camera in the first voyeuristic sequence and then literally followed by Lattuada in a whirlwind of random meetings that reveal each character's unsettling sensations and expectations. Lattuada was not afraid of using Francesca as an allegory of a country moving forward by staging a sequence at her school in the Roman neighborhood of EUR with the Palazzo della civiltà italiana, prototype of fascist rationalist architecture, in the background. *I dolci inganni* emphasizes the new attraction for movement versus classical cinema's penchant for action as we watch Francesca go back and forth from city to countryside. The opening sequence, a voyeuristic piece where the camera fetishizes Francesca's curvaceous body, is an example of what Douchet established as one of the staples of the French New Wave, searching for the truth by investigating the characters' gestures.

The strength of cineastes in the mold of Lattuada and, as we well see, Pietrangeli is that they try not to provide any preconceived role to women,

Figures 13 to 16 Renato Castellani, unceremoniously mocked for the reassuring nature of his pink Neorealism, delivered with *Il brigante* (1961), revolving around the struggles of a group of peasants fighting to secure a piece of land, a powerful tale of frustrated revolt reminiscent of Luchino Visconti's *La terra trema*.

Figures 17 and 18 In *I dolci inganni* (1960), Alberto Lattuada fetishizes the body of Catherine Spaak (Fig. 17), whose luminous presence seems capable of harmonizing space and literally putting the Fascist past, represented here by the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, in the background (Fig. 18).

humbly coming alongside their struggles. Such struggles are viewed as creative acts that cannot be defined neither through backward lifestyles nor, worse, through a simple dismissal of women's individualities. It is an approach common to Carlo Lizzani. Lizzani engaged in the discussion on modernity, at the same time trying to adopt a modernist language, especially with *La vita agra* (1964), based on a novel by Luciano Bianciardi. A grotesque parable dealing with the peril of moral acclimatization, and a direct response to *La dolce vita*, *La vita agra* tells the story of Luciano Bianchi, an intellectual who gets fired by his corporation and emigrates from the provincial town of Grosseto to Milan. He wants to punish the company for his personal job loss and for the death of 43 miners who have died in the explosion of a cave, also owned by the corporation. The movie is interesting for the elliptical approach of the narrative and the sense of indeterminacy of the protagonist's intention, treated as a futile utopian escape attempt and framed by a relentless critique of the economic boom, intended as a fictitious turn with disastrous consequences for the country's identity. After leaving his family behind, Bianchi finds a new amorous partner and joins the ranks of the 'alienated,' the men who are too

tired and distracted by the daily duties to develop an interest in organized revolt; his plan to bomb the skyscraper hosting the headquarters of the corporation folds almost immediately. His lover, played by Giovanna Ralli, has a stoic stance toward work, family, and political commitment and comes across not only as more determined and complex but also as more ethically 'viable,' to the point that one is left with the impression that Bianciardi portrayed that character with some envy. Lizzani symbolically crowns Bianchi's trajectory of adaptation in the last scene, in which, after securing a job in the advertisement industry, he reunites with the old family coming to visit him from Grosseto. Despite its flaws – a somewhat 'verbose' adaptation of the novel that still fails to develop the Marcusian theme of the artificial manufacture of men's 'needs' – *La vita agra* is a fundamental work because it updates the Gramscian theme of the role of the intellectual in society, whose failure in creating an area of operation for himself ends in a spectacular collapse, where the intellectual ultimately forges an alliance with his previous enemies. As mentioned, it reconnects with a similar 'opera-mondo,' *La dolce vita*: Bianchi is the aristocratic Steiner as criticized by Gramsci turned militant and trying not to confine himself in a comfortable ivory tower. But to have any efficacy, the social function of the intellectual needs a participation that he seems to have lost, ultimately divorcing from the classes he wants to educate: when Bianciardi writes that is mandatory to 'be with the crowd that goes to work every morning, to understand the crowd, to love the crowd . . .' he already does not sound as an intellectual but more like the protagonist of a decadent play. One has to notice that, unlike the movie, the novel has to be considered one of the finest accomplishments in post-World War II Italian culture, prodigiously shifting from corporeal details to metaphysical thought sometimes in the breadth of one sentence. When Bianciardi describes the commodification of sex and the relationship between industrial development, individual drives and sexual gratification his analysis is consistent with Foucault's speculation on the subject: the Italian writer sharply portrays the mechanical nature of sexual intercourse as a figure of incessant movement in a capitalist society, emptied of pleasure and metaphorically reproducing the lack of a fruitful connection between people and things. Bianciardi, a devout Communist, is also extremely honest at presenting the strategies of the PCI merely as a pale reflection of those of the Right, with ideal models of rebellion turned into harmless icons one can nail to a wall like a painting: his ideal society is based on an economy of free gifts, without oedipal complex, without civilization and its discontents as we know them. He also dismantles the left-wing pompousness of Aristarco's 'passage from Neorealism to realism' by creating the grotesque character of Dr. Fernaspe, a grey party official in charge of a cultural bulletin, who fights his own revolution not with a hammer and a sickle but with a twine and a ruler, inflexibly measuring the length of the titles that Bianciardi the character creates for the paper.

Exploring the Disfigured Italian Territory

In 1970, while shooting *Cabezas Cortadas*, Brazilian director Glauber Rocha also made a short documentary about his Spanish movie in which he exposed some ideas on the practice of filmmaking, the aesthetics he privileged, the model of production he deemed personally more appropriate, and the new role cinema had to undertake to successfully counter the Hollywood template. Rocha expounds on his theories on political filmmaking, centered on 'socio-anthropological inquiry on the people,' 'closeness to the people,' 'improvisation' and his incorporation of tribal mythology as the inevitable outcome of the cruel rituals of modernity, as in *Câncer* (1972). His emphasis is on the grotesque rather than on a traditional tragic dimension often rooted in classic mythology, therefore too Western and European for Brazilian cinema. Instead of attacking Hollywood and the manufacture of ideology embedded in its mode of production, Rocha states that the Hollywood way of making movies has indeed its own reason for being because of the economic system in force in the United States. Simply put, it would be unwise for other countries to follow that model because the existing conditions make Hollywood possible, but the United States is the only country with the right economic coordinates. Rocha's words confirm another remark made by Randal Johnson[7] regarding the devotion of *cinema novo*'s most luminous representatives for Brazil's venerable production company, Vera Cruz,[8] even when its movies were traditional and ideologically suspect, if only because the production house represented an asset in terms of professionalism and technical competence. Rocha's ideas show awareness and a strategic view for the systematization of production in order to carry out the decolonizing agenda of the Brazilian new wave and stimulate reflection on whether the presence, or lack thereof, of cohesive trends in Italy's modernist wave would emerge as a plausible alternative to Hollywood. The Nouvelle Vague addressed France's way to mature capitalism, through the spatialization of consumer culture colonizing the city and the ideological homogenization of the middle class; on the other hand, British Free Cinema was more concerned with the economic and spiritual horizon of the working class. In Italy, common to social frescoes, choral dramas, and comedies was the problematic embrace of economic progress as a phenomenon that ultimately left more open questions than the ones it promised to solve. Films engaged in a joyless celebration of wealth and technology, seen as regressive spaces of dubious utility 'where objects tended to dictate to people their gestures and movements'[9] and characters interiorized the anxieties and shortcomings of modernization. The perception was of a general distrust of the forces supposedly driving the 'renaissance' of the country. Obsessed with the darker side of industrialization, disposable wealth, and technological innovation, a new aesthetics of the marginal breaks through. Amidst revenant

echoes of the Neorealist tradition, the new social mobility generated figures of desperate pilgrims whose balance, at the end of the journey, will hopelessly be in the red, like in the works of Olmi, Pietrangeli, and Zurlini. Also, an early environmental, 'green' consciousness arose in the writings of Pasolini and in works like *Lo scatenato* by Franco Indovina (1967). It is not only the losers and the disinherited that experience the dire straits of misplacement or of an ancestral poverty. Those who were simply caught off guard by the intrusion of a cynical mentality in a static, slumberous cultural tissue where not much was accomplished are left dead in a ravine, like the co-protagonist in Dino Risi's *Il sorpasso*. Comedies bear the aesthetic 'brunt' of visual renovation and could not escape the bleak vision of a distressing present. Risi was the frontrunner of a new type of comedy that not only confronted the overwhelming sensory attack of modernity but also chose a modernist style to face up to issues like materialism, loss of historical grounds, and consumerist culture. Protagonists of Italian comedies are often engaged in tragically unsuccessful quests for the creation of new communities where one could enjoy a renewed, more authentic sense of one's self, or simply 'chase away' the passing of time. Nescience, unawareness of one's surroundings or death punctuate Italian comedies, like the former organizer of boxing events now turned pitiful wretch who, at the end of *I mostri*, after concocting a bizarre coming-out-of-retirement match for one of his former clients, reduces him into a retarded paraplegic.

While in 1953 it was still thinkable to center the philosophic horizon of a countryside, choral comedy like *Pane, amore e fantasia* around the recurring, obtrusive motif of the 'ruins' – consequence of German bombing and natural earthquakes, a fatalistic *memento mori* for the backward populations of the South – in 1958, the year of the official *vernissage* of the economic boom, Mauro Bolognini realized *Giovani mariti*. The film deals depicts a group of young men, married or committed, with the movie exploring diverse and contradictory aspirations related to affluence, social adjustment and sense of individual precariousness set in a generic urban space symbolizing a nation perceiving that a major historical change is just around the corner. Then, after 1958, other themes became prominent, such as questions of sexuality, assessments of the breadth of the ongoing economic changes and social advancement, and the reconfiguration of the old social structure and their relational forms, often with a spiritual impasse as the outcome. An argument could be made about pink Neorealism and other derivative practices – like Mario Soldati's *La donna del fiume* (1954), an attempt to launch a young Sophia Loren by merging a sexually provocative female protagonist with the Neorealist landscape of the rice field, or works like Pietrangeli's *Nata di marzo* (1958), not disengaged yet from a patriarchal vision of social and family interactions – as a cinematic limbo before filmmakers contributed to the disintegration of once-prevailing archaic, patriarchal, peasant cultures. A fresh authorial sensibility

and sense of ownership emerge, where instead of the expected employment of generic technical solutions to package a consumable product one can rather perceive the ambitious engagement with a newborn image, dealing with questions of generational angst, philosophical nothingness, identitarian crises, and cultural uprooting. Again, using terms like 'school' or 'movement' could be done only in such a loose and nondescript way that it would undermine the very purpose of establishing those categories. If one tries to establish a common vision, it is the creation of a dense image overflowing with allegorical references to the nation's transition, reacting subjectively against the dictatorship of popular expectations.

The privileged loci of the new Italian cinema became de-romanticized, transitional urban spaces and instances of technological innovation perceived as sites of contradiction. The break with Neorealist aesthetics took place gradually, with the faith in dynamic mobility and innovation often replaced by a gloomy sense of anxiety and displacement. The gas station of Michelangelo Antonioni's *Il grido* is a futile symbol of technological sophistication, which in fact hides the desperate state of a lonely woman working to provide for her aging father. Through the apparently aimless wandering of the protagonist, a worker who seems incapable of reconciling his existence with the betrayal of the woman he loved, each encounter with women providing erotic accommodation for him and shelter for his young daughter makes the picture more and more intolerable, just another shade of an eternal present encroaching on him and pushing a possible resolution further away. *Il grido* also allows us to touch upon one of the most debated topics in Antonioni's criticism; i.e., the role of the landscape, especially from *Cronaca di un amore* until *Deserto rosso*, when the bleak and barren fields of Northern Italy, or the wild but gorgeous rocks of Sicily, are replaced by the plants and factories on the Pianura Padana. In the wake of Seymour Chatman's definition of Antonioni's use of the landscape as 'metonymic,' not 'symbolic,' Bálint Kovács goes as far as almost postulating an ornamental role for the various milieus and settings that dominate the early and middle stages of the filmmaker:

> Instead of contiguity, there is a strong contrast between the characters' desolate psychic state and the diversity and beauty of the world around them. It is the same contrast we can find in Rossellini's *Journey to Italy* (1954), but in Antonioni's case there is no reconciliation.[10]

On the one hand, the symbolic movement of Antonioni's movies emanates from the characters, with the landscape utilized as a contrast emphasizing the state of disjuncture between the world and man, as Antonioni himself underscored in many interviews. On the other hand, by disseminating a seamless surface without porosities and leaving the spectator alone in his search for

Figure 19 *La rimpatriata* (1963): Francisco Rabal and Riccardo Garrone (right) reflect on a lost friendship and on the failing Italian miracle.

meaning, Antonioni refuses to actively create expectations for order and narrative resolution. The apparent staticity of Antonioni's closed situations builds up a different sort of tension, invested in the exploration of silences and *temps mort*, showing the interaction among men as something enigmatic and unreconciled – in Alain Robbe-Grillet's definition, 'cinema of the Imaginary'[11] based on perception and not on understanding.

One can concur with Brunetta that the wealth of outstanding pictures and of amazing performers capable of expressing the neurotic adjustments to modernization makes this epoch the golden age of Italian cinema. One can almost randomly pick a minor work with less celebrated actors and discover a goldmine of anecdotal miniatures capable of providing coherent historical interpretation. For example, in Damiani's *La rimpatriata* (1963), the first scene stages a meeting between two old friends, played by Francisco Rabal and Riccardo Garrone, amidst the old urban fabric of Milan – 'My school used to be there!' says Rabal to a construction worker – now turned into piles of amorphous rubble. The character of the fraudulent and cynical developer impersonated by Garrone, a 'serious' evolution of Umberto D'Orsi's caricatures, literally embodies 'the very process of development, [which] even as it transforms the wasteland into a thriving physical and social space, recreates the wasteland inside of the developer himself.'[12] Garrone's character, by asking his old friend to provide a false testimony in court as a personal favor to solve some work-related problems, institutionalizes the dissolution of a pre-boom, idyllic community where authentic tenderness is replaced by capital-driven falsehood and rapacity. The problematic negotiation between tradition and innovation, allegorized by the request to act as the witness of an accident at work Garrone's friend has not seen, generates expectations that do not confer to Italian men a more harmonic and fulfilling identity. *La rimpatriata* captures the bitterness of the times, the false epiphanies, and the present as a continuous struggle devoid of collective ideals. Even authors who owe so much to documentary practice and adhere to reality, like Olmi, had to insert in their pictures

scenes of existential consumption to convey properly the sense of materialist pointlessness of the new Italian citizen/worker.

The frantic mobility emphasized by the new ways of living brings about inescapable moral choices. Director Sandro Franchina was a child actor for Rossellini in *Europa '51*. He played Michele, the son of Ingrid Bergman who commits suicide: the act pushes the mother to a radical reassessment of her values and lifestyle, making her recognize the dreadfulness of work and personal relations that seem to go unnoticed among men. Franchina shot a similarly pessimistic story 17 years later, starring a visionary protagonist who feels as if he is living with the walking dead, and holds death as a refreshing act of self-affirmation. The main character of *Morire gratis* (1967) is an artist of the *maudit* and 'indifferent' type, erotically fetishizing his car and getting oblivious during the act of driving, and yet stubbornly striving to channel his obsession into some sort of useful purpose, which he will put into action when taking to the hospital a driver injured in an accident. This movie can be read as a bitter pronouncement on the state of the nation, seen as a spiritually desertified landscape populated by party-goers, failed artists, and aged *viveurs*. The sculptor is a Nietzchean drifter played by avant-garde painter Franco Angeli who will ultimately find his death in yet another car crash, after he refuses to turn in the drugs he was supposed to hand to a trafficker in Paris. The narcotics are hidden inside the sculpture of a Capitoline she-wolf with a tape recorder inside, spitting Mussolini's speeches and stringing verbal associations about religion, conservative values, Rome, and its weighty, 'sacred' symbolism. Angeli is a variation, a point of no return of the soul-searching characters dealing with wavering existential perspectives coming to the fore with Neorealism; each scene seems to drift around with no direct respondence to a linear narrative, sculpting emotions for a climax that never arrives. *Morire gratis* could be picked to provide closure to the late modernist period because of its amoral tone, its hallucinatory state, and the defamiliarizing pastiche of extradiegetic music and voices: after Franchina's film, the 'tormented soul' type turns into the 'walking zombies' of the *cinema del riflusso* of the 1970s.

Another hybrid road movie is Luigi Comencini's *A cavallo della tigre* (1961), the story of a group of *miserables* trying to escape from prison, and traversing all the *estetica del brutto* – misery, slums, *lumpenproletariat* – disfiguring the country during the boom years. It is the movie where Nino Manfredi plays one of his signature destitute losers, a role that will be taken to the extreme in Ettore Scola's *Brutti sporchi e cattivi* (1976), where Rome is the 'city of god' of a carnivalesque procession of colorful and desperate wretches, reminiscent of Pietro Germi's *La città si difende* (1951). The characters riding Comencini's tiger are condemned to spin from swindle to swindle, from failure to failure: theirs is not a picaresque journey but a motionless agony. At the end of the movie, Manfredi has to renounce his escapist dream of emigration and turns

Figure 20 The artist and the Roman she-wolf of 'civilization' from Sandro Franchina's *Morire gratis* (1967): an irreducible contradiction that can only end with the annihilation of the *maudit* played by Franco Angeli.

himself in, so that his wife and her lover can cash the reward police put on him. In passage, it is also worth mentioning Giuseppe Fina's *Pelle viva* (1962), the story of the relationship between a factory worker of the Pianura Padana and a single mother originally from the South. Fina was a talented cine-amateur capable of translating his skills to a feature film: *Pelle viva* is memorable not only for the dynamic character of the single mother played by Elsa Martinelli, but also for persuasively recreating a social tableau populated by immigrants, commuters, struggling families.

The mutation of the landscape, with the unregulated construction of dwellings and factories transforming the soil, destroys the certainties of the countryside. After *La dolce vita* and *L'avventura*, the defensive reaction will be less neurotic and more schizophrenic, like in the movies of Marco Ferreri, who went beyond mere malcontent and cynicism with his bleak anti-humanism. In Ferreri's opinion, the potential of man has been exhausted, all relationships are doomed to failure – especially heterosexual ones – and we are already witnessing the end of civilization. Ferreri corrodes the usual domain of ethics in works like *Break Up* (1965), a marvellous study on destructive behavior instigated by boredom and convential behavior. Mastroianni plays an industrialist who, right before getting married, feels the urge to discover exactly how much air can be pumped into the balloons normally used for advertisement. The obsession rapidly leads to suicide, which he commits by jumping out of a window (and landing on Ugo Tognazzi's car – Tognazzi, in a memorable cameo, satirizes the oblivious passer-by devastated by the loss of the car and infuriated with the dead man). Ferreri joyously dismantles the rhetorics attached to 'moral problems,' which can be reduced to the will to lose oneself and turn into a robot. Another outlook on the schizophrenic separation between nature and the world of spectacle and advertisement is Franco Indovina's *Lo scatenato* (1967), in which Gassman plays an actor whose performances are always disturbed by animals and ends up living caged in a zoo. Even though *Lo scatenato* is mostly a divertissement nonchalantly driven by a progression of cinematic 'quips,' its flamboyant and colourful visual stimuli and extravagant

Figures 21 to 24 *Lo scatenato* (1968) is a study of psychosis and a mordacious satire of Italy's 'society of spectacle.' Vittorio Gassman plays a failed actor who has his stunts regularly end in failure because of animals (above, Figs 21 and 22); he then reinvents himself as a make-up artist with even more disastrous results, as shown below trying to cut Claudio Gora's moustache during a speech addressing the nation (Fig. 24). Gora plays a cabinet minister who certifies the equivalence of politics and cosmetics (Fig. 23).

locales point to the untapped potential of the medium, to its nontheatrical vocation, where – as Artaud and Epstein said – images are simply generated by other images, becoming self-sufficient worlds that resonate deeply with our subjectivity.

The aesthetic renovation coincided with discontent with brands of Neorealism specifically privileging a rhetorical, humanistic look on disenfranchised classes. The ways filmmakers proved to be absolutely wary of its cheap vulgarization and its socio-economic interpretations stemming from a Marx-Croce line were on full display from the early 1950s. In Claudio Gora's *Febbre di vivere* (1953), the bored and vacuous *ensemble* of bourgeois good-for-nothings mockingly ask Mastroianni if he's an actor 'taken from the streets' because 'everybody today can act with neorealism.'

The hollow pretension of making cinema an instrument of redemption haunted Neorealism from its beginning, and Dino Risi took Gora's derisory stance to its extreme consequences. Risi broke the illusion of social

Figure 25 Shelving Neorealism, or at least incorporating its aesthetics into a different mode of filmmaking, became one of the main pursuits of Italian cineastes in the early 1950s. In Claudio Gora's *Febbre di vivere* (1953) the director takes some shots at the nondescript presence of many nonprofessional actors: here Marcello Mastroianni is addressed by a group of ladies prompting him to try an acting career since 'thanks to neorealism everybody today can become an actor.'

participation/emancipation carried out through the neorealist cinematic experience with a healthy dose of perfidious cynicism. With the portmanteau *I mostri* Risi conjured up a discourse overflowing with delineations, where comedy turns simultaneously into metacinematic commentary and parody of the modernist 'signature moment.' It is only appropriate that Risi works as the trait d'union between Neorealism and the season of 'modernist' comedies: Risi was the only director with a non-Neorealist pedigree called by Zavattini to direct an episode of *L'amore in città*. Also in the aforementioned *Il gaucho* Risi made fun of the dubious legacy of Neorealism and of 'progressive' cinema as constructed discourses, with the episodes of the film journalists interviewing starlettes who can barely spell their names about 'the death of Neorealism' and Brecht's enstranging theater. In *I mostri*, the two memorable episodes directly taking stock of Neorealism are *Presa dalla vita* and *Scenda l'oblio*. Defined by Rémi Fournier Lanzoni as 'a disconcerting portrayal of Italian society, made up of twenty short stories illustrating . . . the different facets of a singular metropolitan typology touching all levels of Italian society,'[13] *I mostri* confirms the transcendental value of many of the works generically labelled *commedia all'italiana,* when in fact appropriating the most sophisticated instruments to provide yet another disenchanted viewpoint. They are comedies of defeat and survival, juxtaposing existential down spirals to the uprise of economic

indexes: one could very well argue that, if cinema wants to stay with the people among the people, then the move to comedy is a natural one (*Roma città aperta* comes to mind). *Scenda l'oblio*, 'a direct allusion to the limits of the neorealism on popular masses during the first years of the new italian society'[14] shows a wealthy couple watching a hyper-realist war movie with a gut-wrenching climax during which Italian hostages are executed, only to debate whether it would be appropriate to build for their new villa a wall similar to the one where the German firing squad had the prisoners line up. But it is with *Presa dalla vita* and its critique of Neorealism as an ethics of intrusion that Risi leaves his indelible mark in the history of Italian cinema. After the opening sequence with the camera following an old lady leaving church, the following segment of the episode may very well leave spectators disconcerted. It looks like a quintessential imitation if not plagiarism from Antonioni, with a shiny and powerful black Chrysler roaming an empty street downtown Rome and generating an anxious wait in the audience as what its next move is going to be and how it will fit in the narrative. It is also the lesson filmmakers learned from Rossellini: time and empty gaps driving the action, his pedagogical cinema of patience in full display. But who are the people emerging from the car? Not a bored high-bourgeois couple like in *Cronaca di un amore*, *La notte*, or *Viaggio in Italia* (1954), it is in fact a smiling Vittorio Gassman who approaches the old lady with one of his signature moves, apparently harmless but cunning at the same time. And when he rings out, with a heavy Roman accent and rasp in his voice as to imitate a lower-class type: 'Signora Ceccarelli!' – at that point we know we are in for a treat. In a dramatic music crescendo, after a short skirmish where Gassman and his accomplices 'gently' invite the lady to join them as she has already done many times in the past, the mob closes in on Signora Ceccarelli (who carries the same last name of Fellini's Cabiria) and by force of arms the car's crew loads her horizontally into the vehicle. Risi treats film scholars and 'High Priests' of Neorealism to a wicked satire of the Zavattinian doctrine of encounter and device of shadowing, with a disturbing close-up of the old lady's legs, only partially covered by black stockings. A surprisingly abrupt cut and a sudden musical transition from dramatic winds to loungy beats then take us to a posh party in a fabulous villa with gorgeous youths carelessly dancing and flirting. The camera pans across the impeccable coutures and the elegant coiffeures only to absent-mindedly stop near a door, from which two young men emerge frenziedly pushing a wheelchair whose passenger is a terrorized, desperately screaming Signora Ceccarelli – screaming to no avail because the wheelchair finishes its trip into the swimming pool, much to the delight of the participants in the dancing party. At that point, the camera moves to a side of the swimming pool, where a fully equipped film crew headed by an indolent director – played by Gassman again, dressed with a scarf and a brimmed hat à la Fellini and indulging in mannerisms à la De Sica – condescendingly urges

Figures 26 to 33 In *Presa dalla vita* from *I mostri* (1963), Signora Ceccarelli is literally 'taken from life' for intellectual and physical exploitation. The episode cynically settles the score with Neorealism and its 'transformational' ambitions.

his aide to tell the staff to once again 'fish out the old woman and dry her up' because it is already time for the next take, during which hopefully Signora Ceccarelli 'will dive with a more convincing abandon, so she will finally learn how to swim, the good old woman.' With fluid movements through modernism's darling ambiences, locales, and devices – the 'alienating' party, the empty street, the metacinematographic commentary, even the Chrysler symbolizing the colonial power of Hollywood in Cinecittà for good measure – Risi transforms the raw materials of social comedy into a transcendental journey of

national individuation, effortlessly creating a cohesive, 'monstrous' world out of the emerging Italy like a consummate, celebrated auteur.

The last shots against Neorealism were fired in 1974 by Luigi Filippo D'Amico with *Il domestico*, where the Neorealist director played by Luciano Salce mercilessly destroys the sentimental fluff attached to all the nonprofessional hype, choosing manservant Lando Buzzanca as a protagonist of his next movie only to have him hurled through a window with no safety net, shattering all of his bones, in a journey of enlightenment that reminds that of Signora Ceccarelli.

Self-reflexivity articulated as skepticism toward cinema as a means for social redemption recurs frequently in *I mostri*. In the episode *La raccomandazione*, Gassman plays himself as a successful theater actor who receives Giulio Francosi, a former colleague who has gone through a difficult period of alcoholism and nervous problems and now visits to ask for a recommendation in an attempt to revive his career. Not only does Gassman end up destroying Francosi's career for good by recommending one of his fellow actors instead of him, but he also lectures the destitute Francosi on the easy millions he makes on the side by working in the movies:

> Gassman: 'Well, success is there, plenty of applause . . . but it's the sound of that applause that doesn't convince me. There is something wrong . . . theater that is detached from reality, that does not represent life anymore, you know, that does not represent society: and then we, theater people – you know better than I do – are enticed, and ensnared – it's sad to say – by the glitz of . . . cinema . . . of millions, of cinema . . . Sixty millions . . . they gave me sixty millions, my dear Giulio, for my latest movie. Look, I feel them all here, heavy on my heart, like sixty years that make me older, sixty years that I have not deserved, sixty years I have not worked for.'

Gassman is also the ragged knight of Mario Monicelli's picaresque film *L'armata Brancaleone* (1966), a memorable tale of wandering poor devils 'led' by the threadbare Gassman in their surreal attempt at securing the fief of Aurocastro. Hailed as one of the most glorious specimens of Italian-style comedy, *L'armata Brancaleone* is a triumph of reflexivity, mocking the glamorous façade of Hollywood's 'reinterpretations' of the Middle Ages through the decrowning language of carnival. Monicelli is often read as the unsurpassed sculptor of national character(s), but he was also a refined connoisseur of continental and American literatures. He began his career with a short based on a novel by Edgar Allan Poe and perfected Poe's desacralizing approach in *Brancaleone alle crociate* (1970), in which we have a direct reference to a danse macabre in Gassman's sword fight against Death. Monicelli's films carry a tone

of apparent lightness that is often interrupted by impermanence, sometimes by impending death. The ironic and colorful opening titles drawn by Emanuele Luzzati summarize this duality by paying homage to the female protagonists individually and staging deaths during armed confrontations. Barbara Steele is ironically casted as one of her patented 'dark queens,' and shortly after their encounter sadistically whips the poor Gassman, who was simply hoping for a sexual rendez-vous; Gassman himself departs from his monotonically athletic and wealthy persona[15] to impersonate a supreme loser, the key to access a picaresque-anarchic dream whose ethical core is a state- and law-free lunatic sense of community. The adherences to the system of Mikhail Bakhtin are also confirmed by the parodic use of religion and the neurasthenic preacher Zenone, played by Enrico Maria Salerno, who gives to his character an unforgettable salesman's pitch. With its contamination of genres and mésalliances of highly spiritual and lowly material, of the sublime and the hopelessly vulgar, *L'armata Brancaleone* is a libertarian, melancholic hymn to the elaboration of alternative cultures and behaviors disengaged from tradition and officiality.

Another tale from the Middle Ages was Vittorio Cottafavi's *I cento cavalieri* (1964), about the overthrowing of Moorish rule in a small town in medieval Spain. The film conjugates action and abstraction, using Brechtian devices to highlight moral contrasts more than representations of social totality. Even in his works that can be promptly associated to 'lower' genres, Cottafavi emerges as a sophisticated metteur en scène, conferring to the horror/fantasy/mythological figures a concrete meaning that echoes beyond the expectations of the genre. Cottafavi applied his deconstructing talent to multiple genres: with his hysterical mythological *peplum Ercole alla conquista di Atlantide* (1961), for example, Cottafavi 'creates an ironic prefiguration of the inhumane Nazi order.'[16]

Antonio Pietrangeli and the Italian Way to the Nouvelle Vague

Antonio Pietrangeli is an exemplary figure in the history of Italian film[17] because as a post-Neorealist filmmaker he had to face a number of very difficult tasks. He wanted to find ways to renew the language of Neorealism, without rejecting *in toto* this predecessor, which he had loved so much during its heroic period. In fact, in his career as a critic and film reviewer, Pietrangeli became the advocate of realist solutions that later would be almost prophetically adopted by the key figures of the Neorealist movement, but he also wanted to address the changes that were taking place in Italy on the verge of an era of industrialization and social modernization. In short, the Roman filmmaker was looking for a philosophical bridge allowing Italy to catch up with the rest of Europe, while at the same time adopting a sort of cinematic inquiry that would allow the discovery of previously missing protagonists, such as Italian women.

Mira Liehm is the only American scholar who considered Pietrangeli not only as a critic and scriptwriter, but also as an important director; namely, for his *Il sole negli occhi*. The picture came out in 1953, coincidentally the year many considered to be the last year of Neorealism. Such coincidence is very symbolic for the challenge of renovating the cinematic language that Antonio Pietrangeli accepted and ultimately won with impressive results. Pietrangeli began his career as a critic and film reviewer for the journal *Cinema*. Extremely competent in French culture to the point of being virtually bilingual, Pietrangeli in fact published his most important critical contribution – an overview article on Italian cinema and Neorealism in particular – in the French journal *Revue du cinéma*.

> In search of a style, our film-makers again began to film outside the studios, slowly rediscovering the Italian landscape, and becoming reacquainted with the reality of their time and the problems of their country, which they have only understood and expressed in these latter years. Even in those intellectual directors that were attracted to aestheticism by nature, a desire arose to paint a lively, non-conventional Italy.[18]

'Panoramique sur le cinéma italien' can be defined as a compact history of Italian cinema from its origins to Neorealism, retracing its most important moments while at the same time highlighting the supposedly natural vocation of the national art; that is, the realist tendency. Today it is a document that one can appreciate especially for some notes on the Italian cinema of the 1930s and 1940s. The climax of the narrative is *Ossessione*, where Pietrangeli is finally satisfied by the use of the background of so many popular figures and real Italian towns and outskirts, the plasticity of the bodies, and the virulence of their passions. After *Ossessione*, the door of realism is opened and directors have only to conform to its rules. Pietrangeli can in fact be defined as a Neorealist before Neorealism, advocating a more intense bonding with Italian landscapes and social issues even before the actual advent of Visconti, Rossellini, and De Sica. Pietrangeli seeks to organize ideologically an idea for a new cinema that has to be *gramscianamente* national and popular. He is a master in detecting every possible 'realist' hint also in works and directors that apparently have nothing to do with it – the Fritz Lang of *Metropolis* and *Dr. Mabuse*, and Luis Buñuel, just to name two cineastes apparently unconcerned with transparent truthfulness. He believes that the quantum leap in the quality of film has to go through a more mature and sophisticated adoption of a nonescapist, non-Hollywoodian and therefore problematic, inquiring, realist stance. His articles resemble similar stances by De Santis, Alicata, Aristarco, and Visconti, for the closer relationship Italian cinema should have with the country's historical events and for the tireless efforts to individuate a specific, authentic Italian tra-

dition and vocation in literature and the arts to be then translated onto film. As Pietrangeli says in 'Analisi spettrale del film realistico,' the goal is to transform the Italic sense of 'observation,' the love of 'concreteness' (as observed in the works of Alessandro Manzoni), and the tradition of Renaissance painting into a new experience of realist cinema. Also, he was not immune to the retroactive disease of finding the exact antecedents to Neorealism, indicated in the essay 'Verso un cinema italiano' in Alessandro Blasetti's *1860* (1934) and in Nino Martoglio's *Sperduti nel buio*. His early articles present a number of ideas picked from the protagonists of the debate in vogue at the time, and basically they do not depart from other contributions dealing with issues such as the national spirit, the artificiality of stale narratives, and the need for unmediated representations giving sense to 'human existence and its troubles.'[19] With a definitive tone, he insists on a familiar recipe of injecting Italian cinema with full-bodied shots of realism:

> The fundamental thesis . . . is that in art there is no innovation or renewal if not starting from the extreme validity of the real and of truth.[20]

> In art there is no renewal if there is no realism.[21]

The quest for realism resurfaces periodically in Italian film, even today. Next to Olmi and Rosi, who explicitly started their cinematic practices welcoming the Neorealist framing, or Taviani, who partially rejected it, we have filmmakers who, pursuing newer forms of realism, either did not feel the necessity for a theoretical dialogue with Neorealism or came to the same conclusions through different ideological paths. The theoretical rejection of industrial cinema led also to interesting experiments of craftsmanship, like Grifi's *vidigrafo*, where filmmakers were forced to engineer their own shooting/recording devices if they wanted to escape the usual circuits of production, broaden the scope of social analysis and provide agency to groups excluded from signification. Pietrangeli is capable of depicting a convincing social landscape while at the same time maximizing Neorealism as 'early mental cinema' and perfecting a sophisticated cinematic language, like that of an emerging new wave: his trajectory from cinema journals to the trenches of film direction also resembles similar stories of writers from the *Cahiers du cinéma*. He is a master at analyzing movies and evaluating the scenes that can remain in our memory, the objects pointing to rural life that we will still be able to remember after the movie is over. In his opinion, those are the only worthy moments, the human documents of American film showing stories of poverty and passion, found in Mack Sennett, in King Vidor, in the early westerns; and again, Soldati, Ferdinando Maria Poggioli, Chiarini, Gianni Franciolini, and Lattuada are worthy only when they do not indulge in convoluted symbologies and obscure

formalisms. His favors went to the proletarian lovers of *Ossessione* and their erotic frenzy: Pietrangeli's cinema is also made up of encounters, mostly unsuccessful ones. In his most accomplished work, *Io la conoscevo bene*, the story of a girl with humble origins trying to become an actress in Rome, the female protagonist Adriana simply does not react when she is approached: Pietrangeli's statement is a strong one in showing a creature who is annihilated by the new world she is facing. One of her few individual decisions is to give herself to the humble garage mechanic she had previously rejected, silently standing in a corner, almost turned into an object, as if becoming an inanimate thing is her only possibility.

Pietrangeli works at a crucial moment in our cinematography, when Italian filmmakers must bitterly certify the end of Neorealism but at the same time they can enjoy a number of new ways offered to them by the filmic evolution in Europe and the unprecedented social mobility that provides thousands of stories for inspiration:

> The period that Pietrangeli chooses for his more significant stories is the early '60s, years of rapid economic growth, when phenomena like the abandonment of rural forms of production and emigration towards big cities come along with a sudden and quick decline of provincial moral and social schemes, temporarily without a replacement.[22]

Nor does he accept and support the old, anti-industrial cliché, seeing industrial production as quality's sworn enemy:

> Industrial interference in the creative process of film cannot but result in a limitation of the freedom necessary for the artist to carry out his work: and on the other hand, the industrialization of cinema brings with itself the danger of a gigantic development in quantity, of an hypertrophic production – inevitably getting serialized and standardized – at the expense of the quality of single films produced. [The] American film industry is a typical example – perfectly, admirably organized, doubtlessly superior to any other nation's – which, while producing every year hundreds of excellent, well refined and over-polished works of high craftsmanship, very seldom gives movies that can be called with good reason works of art.[23]

Lorenzo Pellizzari summarizes: 'Pietrangeli as a director . . . begins to use in his cinema the freedom from some constraints that Pietrangeli as a critic would probably not have totally approved.'[24] On a very immediate level, this impression is confirmed by the transcription of the preliminary dialogue that Pietrangeli had with his collaborators during the production of *Io la conoscevo bene*, when the director does not seem very concerned about additional

Figures 34 to 36 An elaborate theoretician of Neorealism even before *Roma città aperta* and *Ladri di biciclette*, Antonio Pietrangeli directed *Io la conoscevo bene* in 1965. It is one of the first post-World War II Italian movies with a female protagonist who is not only removed from maternal and bridal aspirations but whose struggles metaphorize the transition of an entire country. *Io la conoscevo bene* is a mirror movie of *La dolce vita*: Adriana, played by Stefania Sandrelli, goes through demeaning stages of loss and degradation like the Marcello of Fellini's film. Her family is a source of contempt (top, Fig. 34); showbiz is an underworld of abjection; the multiplication of her own image painfully confirms by contrast the desertification of her interiority (Fig. 35); not even the economic independence, symbolized here by her own car, can save her from committing suicide (Fig. 36).

costs and is always pushing for the most spectacular and expensive solution. But apart from this minor anecdote, Pietrangeli makes a huge leap forward because he accepts the challenge of a new *société du spectacle*, dominated by the power of the image and caught during the crisis of an uncertain and violent transition in the economy, values, and social relations. He is determined to show the effects of change on unequipped, defenseless individuals. The role of Pietrangeli is acknowledged by Brunetta, who highlights his innovative screenwriting and includes Pietrangeli in the restricted number of those filmmakers who have portrayed the transformation undergone by women in a changing environment. Pietrangeli, together with Emmer and Comencini, Brunetta writes, gives to female characters parts of higher 'propulsive boost.'[25]

To his credit, Pietrangeli was the one who in the era of pink Neorealism, dominated by idyllic endings and escapist perspectives, used cinema to reflect on the problems and the direction Italian society was taking, focusing on the Italian woman as a preferred symbol of the great changes taking place at the time, continuing the female portraits of Cottafavi, De Santis, and Antonioni: 'Between the '50s and the '60s woman would appear in Italian cinema, in comedies, as mother, sister, whore but not as bearer of problems, unhappiness, suffered repression. The word 'feminism' did not even exist back then.'[26] And in fact, Pietrangeli made in 1960 the grim *Adua e le compagne*, about a group of prostitutes trying to reinvent their lives as Italian law closes all brothels in the country. Even though Brunetta acknowledges that Pietrangeli fulfills the meritorious task of portraying the casualties of women's bid for liberation and social emancipation, he somehow belittles the director's poetics, saying that Pietrangeli 'strives to annul his presence behind the camera and serve the plot and the protagonists.'[27] It is partially true that Pietrangeli aims for a transparent style, because he does not contaminate the script with his personal obsessions or nightmares à la Fellini, but he tries to complicate the events portrayed with symbolic associations and long takes, stressing the uncertainties of his characters. Thus, Adriana is constructed from the outside by her casual encounters, while to express her emotions she only has pop songs at her disposal.

Io la conoscevo bene consists of nineteen macrosequences, where the protagonists are always using or giving orders to Adriana; each one with its own microclimax, as pointed out by Lino Micciché in the miscellaneous volume on the movie.[28] Each sequence – from the interior scenes and their suggested squalor, to the locations in Rome and especially the last, ephemerally liberating driving scene through the city at dawn – gives its contribution to organizing a phenomenology of alienation. As mentioned above, Pietrangeli was an expert in Continental literature, especially in French and English novels, and his use of dialogue that is at the same time defamiliarizing and contiguous with the character resembles the style of such authors as Virginia Woolf or

Ivy Compton-Burnett. When in Ettore Scola's *C'eravamo tanto amati* Stefania Sandrelli introduces her character, she says she was born in the province of Udine, precisely in Trasachis. Apart from choosing Sandrelli for the main female character, the choice of Trasachis as birthplace of the main female protagonist is Scola's homage to the memory of Pietrangeli, the artist and the friend, since the obscure Friulian small town is also mentioned by the actress Véronique Vendell during the party scene in *Io la conoscevo bene*. This picture is a consistent experiment showing a soul in a precarious state of discovery, making its protagonist Adriana a symbol of 'the tensions and aspirations of young women in this phase of transition,'[29] of a nation moving toward a new and yet unknown social pact, not based on rural culture but on a pragmatic 'mechanization' of human relationships. Pietrangeli is a filmmaker who works with contrasts. For the most part, his male characters are bourgeois types who symbolize the anthropological crisis in Italy when confronted by women who do not fall into the roles mentioned above by Scola. Even though Pietrangeli is interested in the evolution of the Italian bourgeoisie, his 'unconventional' women, always stroked by smooth camera movement within American and pan shots, are portrayed while facing phenomena of subjugation and marginalization. In his films, men are generally portrayed as shallow, satisfied representatives of the *petite bourgeoisie*, while women are the only characters going through crises and capable of a spiritual evolution:

> Pietrangeli acknowledged one and only one condition of women: that of oppressed, of victims in a society made for men, where for women it is extremely difficult, if not absurd, to find a way out.[30]

Critic and journalist Roberto Silvestri defined *Io la conoscevo bene* as the most important movie of the 1960s. The entire movie is characterized by the theme of speed. At a sordid party organized by the low-life of Cinecittà, the old, failed actor Baggini played by Ugo Tognazzi, is asked to amuse squalid parasites and their like by doing the 'train' skit. Thus, the cars, but also other means like the motorboat, are cinematic sites where the aspiring actress played by Stefania Sandrelli can finally fall into an oblivious state and forget her misery. In the pre-finale, Sandrelli drives home in a dreamlike sequence before making a crucial decision to commit suicide: the same sequence, albeit not ending in a tragic way, can be seen in another Pietrangeli movie, *La visita* (1963). The similarities with French New Wave films are numerous, especially with Louis Malle's *Le feu follet* (1963), but it is the use of Sandrelli, reminiscent of Godard's use of Anna Karina, that gives us access to the core of the film: the formal devices of the camera look and the close-up and the casual use of jangling tunes[31] used to construct the image as a cluster of affections that does not need to refer to anything outside itself or explicitly suggest social

criticism. The close-up, that device which according to Béla Bálasz enhances a facial language that cannot be tamed or restrained – the same close-up which, as Gilles Deleuze writes, 'suspends individuation,'[32] – indirectly takes us above generic commentary, hinting at a mysterious, untamable interiority. Pietrangeli also adds unexpected emersion of memories charged with emotional meaning and uses such moments as apparently accidental twists, thereby introducing an 'irrational' and supremely personal element. The Roman filmmaker insisted on this theoretical approach, rooting for the application of cinematographic guidelines resembling the orality of language, and not the written – synonymous with artificial, fictional – aspect. Pietrangeli also implies that, in terms of self-affirmation, the goals to be reached are very obscure: the director harshly describes a world where the deepest feelings and the most profound emotions can be described by pop numbers, where immediate satisfaction and pressing needs have supplanted archaic values and overall – be they moral, religious, or philosophical – views.

From a technical standpoint, it is interesting to observe that during *Io la conoscevo bene* Pietrangeli creates a narratee, the loser/journalist Cianfanna played by Manfredi, taking Sandrelli/Adriana to a miserable interview with the director of a lousy magazine, only to reject his role further in the film. One could argue that Pietrangeli, besides the 'objective' style of his filming – establishing shots, close-ups of Sandrelli – wanted to diminish the role of every character who could take upon himself a mediating look. When the novelist played by Joachim Fuchsberger tries to sum up what he knows of Adriana, the spectator's knowledge remains the same and is actually more confused than ever:

> 'Le va bene tutto, è sempre contenta. Non desidera mai niente, non invidia nessuno, è senza curiosità. Non si sorprende mai. Le umiliazioni non le sente, eppure povera figlia . . . gliene capitano tutti i giorni. Le scivola tutto addosso senza lasciare traccia come su certe stoffe impermeabilizzate. Ambizioni zero. Morale nessuna, neppure quella dei soldi perché non è nemmeno una puttana. Per lei ieri e domani non esistono. Non vive neanche giorno per giorno perché già questo costringerebbe a programmi troppo complicati, perciò vive minuto per minuto. Prendere il sole, sentire i dischi e ballare sono le sue uniche attività. Per il resto, è volubile, incostante, ha sempre bisogno di incontri nuovi e brevi, non importa con chi: con sé stessa mai.'[33]

Through the words pronounced by Fuchsberger's character one could go as far as to establish an allegorical role for Sandrelli/Adriana, representing archaic Italy's perilous trip from its uprooted peasant culture to the lights of a city that moves too fast for her. But perhaps Adriana is just another failure in the mold of the unskilled adventurers of *Cronaca di un amore*.

Pietrangeli's superb montage of emotions allows the viewer to understand the multiplicity of Adriana, freely cutting to past episodes and memories and showing the many Adrianas she has been in her life while simultaneously cohabiting her present: pure cinema of encounter one may say, merging Bazin with Zavattini, where the camera acts as a supreme consciousness structuring the continuous flux of matter. Adriana's desire to become an actress without skills and preparation indexes the country's unpreparedness for industrialization and the naïve nature of the endeavor. Cinema plays a central role also after the aforementioned train skit sequence, when the vainglorious and paltry 'great actor' Roberto, played by Enrico Maria Salerno, asks the old Gigi Baggini to serve as a pimp/intermediary by asking for Adriana's sexual favors. The unscrupulous host Paganelli played by Franco Fabrizi, Roberto – who is barely capable of squeezing a few stuttered words when asked to say something about himself – and Cianfanna the loser put on display an environment that Adriana cannot handle, too out of phase with herself and the surrounding world.

The narrator in the title states that he/she knows Adriana well, but during the film this 'I' is never found, nobody says they know Adriana and nobody actually cares about knowing her. Pietrangeli joins the characters of his creation as well as his spectatorship by constructing a fleeting knowledge of the female protagonist. Adriana is a vortex of ephemeral changes – hairdo, wardrobe, accessories, music – apparently reinforcing her self-esteem but in fact never affecting her real condition of emptiness and instability, culminating in her suicide:

> The costume is also an instrument revealing the counterfeiting power of images: after Adriana gives an interview, she finds herself playing the part of a dumb automaton in the edited version for a newsreel. The close-up of her heel through the broken stocking, manipulated by the sarcastic and chauvinist commentary of the newsreel's presenter becomes the emblem of the body fragmented and reassembled by the power of the image: Adriana's deceived naïveté leads to her final but conscious self-destruction.[34]

Pietrangeli informs Adriana with a strong communicative mandate: the female protagonist serves as a symbol for a nation still uncertain about its movement from the agricultural to the industrial and the chaotic renegotiation of roles, social controllers, and individual perspectives. The title speculates about how well it is possible to know another person. Pietrangeli illustrates the additional uncertainty in an age of shifting masses and beliefs: his criticism is not against pop culture or the new, ruthless 'monsters' of Italian society; rather, it is an analysis of the consequences of a cultural void, of a weak and defenseless

individual losing grip on reality. Many have noted the obsessive relationship that Adriana has with her record player:

> The record player . . . is operated by Adriana with her foot, mechanically, like an object that runs by itself and does not belong to the separate or much less 'liturgical' moments of her existence, but it is called to work as a 'presence' (therefore a companionship, a complicity) always ready and compliant.[35]

And again, the apparent absurdity of looking for inspiration from an inanimate thing emphasizes the renegotiation of values for Adriana and women like her. They do not find comfort in anything other than dancing or music, because their interiority is too rich for the men to understand. In Pietrangeli's Italy, women do have something to share and communicate with other people, but men are not ready to listen because they have not adjusted to their unprecedented dynamism. Pietrangeli is interested in this anthropological fracture. Coherent with his tirelessly innovating stance in Italian cinema, Pietrangeli also shows something almost unprecedented in movies centered on female characters: the relationship that Adriana has with her parents. Light years removed from older melodramas where women were confined to usual mother/prostitute roles and 'narrativization of the subsequent oedipal trajectory in female characters appears to be denied from the outset,'[36] in *Io la conoscevo bene* we can appreciate a process of dynamic differentiation and identity formation shaped through a contentious relationship with one's parents. The movie engages with significant questions initiated by scholars such as Pierre Sorlin, who in *Italian National Cinema* wondered about the real degree of alteration of mental attitudes and expectations during the economic boom. Adriana could very well be the same girl who, at the end of *La dolce vita*, is turned into a chicken by Mastroianni/Marcello: Pietrangeli's assessment, like Fellini's, is a grim one.

Fast Cars, Modern Confessionals

The technological appropriation of a 'fast car' coincides with a new self-awareness and a richer palette of existential choices, often serving as the 'metaphor for the glittering and transitory possibilities of the present.'[37] The car acquires prominent importance, to the point of becoming the privileged locus of crisis or epiphanic revelation, symbolizing if not sealing forever the agonizing monotony of bourgeois life as in Antonioni's *La notte* (1961), Eriprando Visconti's *Una storia milanese* (1962), Florestano Vancini's *Le stagioni del nostro amore* (1966), or even staging hypocritical removals of violence and murder, as in Montaldo's *Una bella grinta*. The car is also capable of confirm-

Figures 37 to 39 Technology certifying the alienation of family constraints and prefiguring the future 'aUtopia' where man is a prosthesis of the car: Ugo Tognazzi from *Vernissage*, an episode of the portmanteau movie *I mostri* (1963) by Dino Risi.

ing the main character's newly acquired independence or of pushing her to irrevocable decisions, as in Pietrangeli's *Io la conoscevo bene* and *La visita*, not to mention the legendary episode *Vernissage* from *I mostri* where the car is shown as the most economic means to save money in mercenary sexual intercourse. But the car often hides a threatening nature: it is a subtlety noted by Anita Angelone in Valerio Zurlini's *La ragazza con la valigia*, where Claudia

Cardinale is unceremoniously removed from a slick convertible only to be pitilessly bounced from lout to lout, from misery to misery. Turning from 'girl with a suitcase' into 'girl who is a suitcase,' Angelone writes, Cardinale, the once exuberant allegory of an aggressively modernizing nation, 'loses all animation in these scenes, and hence can be read not only as a figure bearing the weight of a nation's past, but also one who signifies its present: an Italy pushed and pulled in every direction by modernity.'[38]

By the same token, the epitaph of such liberation dreams is *L'automobile* (1971) by Alfredo Giannetti, a TV movie whose protagonist is a prostitute played by Anna Magnani. In the picture, liberty is completely identified with the car Magnani buys for her affirmation: its loss metaphorizes an act of emancipation that cannot move forward. In *La notte*, their relationship quickly deteriorating, Marcello Mastroianni tells Jeanne Moreau he has to say something that may be hurtful: 'Is that really necessary?' she pointedly retorts while the two are stuck in a traffic jam exacerbating their emotional distress. After Mastroianni – who plays a marginally famous writer struggling with his own spiritual listlessness – recounts his meeting with the young, crazed girl at the clinic where they have just paid visit to a moribund friend, Moreau coldly scoffs at his display of anguish, adding that it could just be good inspiration for his next short story. Briefly framed by a god's eye shot symbolizing her lucid consciousness about the continuous crisis their life has become, she eventually comforts him like a mother would do, showing an acute sense of awareness for the pain surrounding them. Walking through buildings in ruins or just being erected and streets populated by anonymous passersby and generic low-lifes, the character of Lidia strives for a moment of clarity, an intuition that would rescue her from being soulless matter, from the feeling of disconnection and lack of relation to other human beings.

The deconstruction of love and the emptiness of intellectual production are themes shared by Florestano Vancini's *Le stagioni del nostro amore* (1966). This gloomy work explores the doubts of a formerly *engagé* journalist played by Enrico Maria Salerno who, left by his lover, goes back to his native town of Mantua to try to make sense of his past. Through a series of encounters with former friends and party comrades, Salerno spirals into a hopeless desperation, leading in turn to a bout of futile destruction of property. *Le stagioni del nostro amore* opens and closes with sequences where Salerno confronts key episodes of his life while in a car. First, in a smooth, frontal chiaroscuro picture, he is told by his lover, played by Jacqueline Sassard, that their relationship is over, and the most painful thing about it is not representing anything anymore for the other. After love ceases to signify, it is the turn of ideology and political commitment. He meets with Leonardo, played by Gian Maria Volonté, a member of the local government in his hometown, who is also facing a twofold crisis with his cheating wife and with the waning appeal of the Soviet Union

Figures 40 to 43 Florestano Vancini's *Le stagioni del nostro amore* (1966) establishes a parallel between personal crisis and ideological uncertainties. Enrico Maria Salerno plays Vittorio Borghi, a former Communist whose life is at the mercy of forces he cannot interpret. He is often caught by the camera in the act of being interrogated by images (Figs 41 and 43) and taking stock of failed relationships (Figs 40 and 42).

as source of inspiration and political militancy in general. The philosophical horizon of the movie is provided by a Mantuan nobleman played by Daniele Vargas, who invites the local intelligentsia together with financial and political big shots to elegant soirées at his decadent villa: 'As far as I'm concerned' – says the count while pointing to a Rubens painting he purchased in London, and after he cynically asked Salerno about his past fervor for socialist-realist art dealing with 'rice weeders and fishermen' – 'I dream of a world where churches and party branches are empty.' Salerno is also shocked when he runs into an old friend, a former partisan played by Gastone Moschin, now conveniently and literally marginalized to the darkness as a night watchman. The movie ends with Salerno's brief moment of intuition: he hurls himself against a group of careless youths and the jukebox they use as favorite pastime, then, after his desperate and puerile act of rebellion, confusedly goes back to his car and aimlessly drives away. Not even the ending, reminiscent of *La dolce vita*, in which

Figures 44 to 46 The movie ends with a futile act of rebellion, when Borghi destroys a jukebox only to expose even further his desperation (bottom, Fig. 46). Similarly lost and caught in a marital crisis is Communist Leonardo Varzi, played by Gian Maria Volonté (top, second from left, Fig. 44). The only 'positive' character is the Count, played by Daniele Vargas (first from left, Fig. 44), who cynically entertains the city's financial and political powers while finding intellectual solace in his art collection.

Figure 47 *Una bella grinta* (1965) by Giuliano Montaldo is a movie where entrepreneurship overlaps with cult, symbolized by the gritty personality of Ettore Zambrini, played by Renato Salvatori, here with wife Luciana, played by Norma Bengell.

we see the merciful gesture of a young girl giving him the wallet he had lost during the laughable and useless assault, seems to determine another option, another form of human tenderness: it is a fleeting and ephemeral encounter in a permanent state of purposelessness. Just like the waning economic boom that is returning Italy to an anxious state of stagnation, the car here does not signify mobility or exhilarating abandon but rather fear and perplexity.

The aforementioned *Una bella grinta* is Giuliano Montaldo's second feature film after *Tiro al piccione*, which will be analyzed in the next chapter. Renato Salvatori is Ettore Zambrini, an implacable and vindictive entrepreneur who, albeit going through a financial crisis because of excessive exposure with local banks, raises the stakes of his survival as an industrialist by recklessly investing in a new warehouse and plant, at the same time disposing of his wife's lover. Incapable of plastic impersonations but perfect for combative characters relying on brute force, Salvatori is the perfect representative of a new class of rogues who do not waste time in market research or cost analysis. After one of his lenders questions the viability of his latest enterprise, exposing his improvident planning, Salvatori shouts 'I, Ettore Zambrini, I am the guarantee of this whole operation!' An indissoluble state of malaise runs through movies like *Una bella grinta*, with images overflowing with the purely visual situations Deleuze praised in Neorealist cinema forcing characters to reflect on their futility and uprootedness in the world. Such are the locales and containers like the car of the last scene, where a satisfied Zambrini mischievously interrogates his wife about her past, knowing of her affairs but giving her the chance of sealing the memories and symbolically burying her in their new automobile.

In *Una storia milanese*, the opening sequence sets the tone for another cinematic reflection on the futility of romantic involvement. The scenic shot on

Figures 48 to 49 *Una storia milanese* (1962) by Eriprando Visconti is an example of the cinema of dissolving feelings. The director insists on the failed relationship between individuals and the environment, either in the new mass manifestations (top, Fig. 48) or with the countryside, representing the once stable values of family and local economy (bottom, Fig. 49).

an endless parking lot is followed by the camera zooming in on long trails of people walking in an orderly way down the outer ovals of the San Siro stadium, framing the story that will follow as an impossible escape from disciplined group rituals. *Una storia milanese* is a lesson of elliptical editing, building the dramatic climax with apparently innocuous conversations and observations about the relationship that the protagonist Valeria (Danièle Gaubert) has with the son of a wealthy entrepreneur. After love between them reciprocally fades, with apparent indifference she goes to Switzerland to get an abortion. By cutting from situations potentially establishing a new level of psychological introspection to seemingly de-dramatizing scenes, Visconti conjures a masterful portrait of a society where a massive re-evaluation of old values is taking place, and new behaviors are replacing archaic forms of coexistence.

Notes

1. Veronica Pravadelli, 'Moderno/postmoderno: Elementi per una teoria,' in Bruno Torri (ed.), *Nuovo Cinema (1965–2005), Scritti in onore di Lino Micciché* (Venice: Marsilio, 2005), 70.
2. In *Così piangevano*, Morreale notices how the script continuously destabilizes the rules of the melodrama through pointed attacks carried out against the pivots of the 'weepie': Cottafavi toys with staples such as the emphatic soundtrack, the narrative climax, the declaration of love and deconstructs them with oblique references and ellipses, making his style very obtrusive and self-conscious in the process (see the chapter 'Le grand Vittorio,' in Emiliano Morreale, *Così piangevano: Il cinema melò nell'Italia degli anni cinquanta* (Rome: Donzelli, 2010), 225–31).
3. Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 162–3.
4. Marco Bertozzi, *Storia del documentario italiano: Immagini e cultura dell'altro cinema* (Venice: Marsilio, 2008), 156.
5. Speaking about Rossellini, de Seta insists on the immediacy and irruption of an independent rhythm into the reality of things in an interview with Goffredo Fofi: '*Viaggio in Italia* è molto moderno. Anch'io ho sempre rifiutato quella distinzione incomprensibile tra documentario e fiction. Dove finisce uno e comincia l'altra? Di Rossellini, l'ultimo episodio di *Paisà*, "muto", sembra girato dal vero. Era come se l'autore fosse stato lì, mentre si svolgevano le cose, con quelle barche in mezzo ai canneti.' In Gianni Volpi and Goffredo Fofi (ed.), *Vittorio de Seta: Il mondo perduto* (Turin: Lindau, 1999), 49.
6. Arbasino takes multiple shots at Antonioni's cinema in *Fratelli d'Italia* (Milan: Adelphi, 1993).
7. In Randal Johnson, *Cinema Novo x 5: Masters of Contemporary Brazilian Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984).
8. House of Italian actors/directors Luciano Salce and Adolfo Celi early in their careers, when they successfully exported themes and situations from comedies, melodramas, and Neorealist critiques to Brazil.
9. Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 5.
10. András Bálint Kovács, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema 1950–1980* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), 150.
11. Alain Robbe-Grillet, 'Antonioni o il cinema del reale,' in Carlo di Carlo (ed.), *Il cinema di Michelangelo Antonioni* (Milan: Il Castoro/La Biennale di Venezia, 2002), 91.
12. Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 68.
13. Rémi Fournier Lanzoni, *Comedy Italian Style: The Golden Age of Italian Film Comedies* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 94.
14. Ibid. 97.
15. This seriality in Gassman's early career can be appreciated for instance in Luigi Zampa's *La ragazza del Palio* (1958) and Ettore Scola's *La congiuntura* (1964) and *L'arcidiavolo* (1966).
16. Angelo Moscariello, *Breviario di estetica del cinema: Percorso teorico-critico dentro il linguaggio filmico dal Lumière al digitale* (Milan: Mimesis, 2011), 105.
17. Antonio Maraldi, *Antonio Pietrangeli* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1992). Antonio Maraldi entitled the first chapter of his volume on Pietrangeli 'Pietrangeli, attraverso il cinema italiano.' Pietrangeli died prematurely in 1969 while shooting the uneven social drama *Come, quando, perché*, which was then completed by Valerio Zurlini.

18. Antonio Pietrangeli 'Panoramique sur le cinéma italien,' in Overbey, *Springtime in Italy*, 173.
19. Previously in *Bianco e nero*, 8 (1942), now in Maraldi, *Antonio Pietrangeli: Verso il realismo*, (Cesena: Il Ponte Vecchio, 1995), 56.
20. Ibid. 56.
21. Antonio Pietrangeli 'Analisi spettrale del film realistico,' in *Cinema* 146, July 25, 1942, now in Maraldi, *Antonio Pietrangeli: Verso il realismo*, 105.
22. Elisa Bussi Parmiggiani, 'Desiderio e infelicità: La donna nel cinema di Antonio Pietrangeli,' in Tonia Caterina Riviello (ed.), *La donna nel cinema italiano* (Rome: Fabio Croce Editore, 2001), 136.
23. Antonio Pietrangeli, 'Gli intellettuali e il cinema: Massimo Bontempelli,' in Maraldi, *Antonio Pietrangeli: Verso il realismo,* 31.
24. Lorenzo Pellizzari, 'Un critico cinematografico degli anni '40,' in Lino Micciché (ed.), '*Io la conoscevo bene' di Antonio Pietrangeli* (Turin: Lindau, 1999), 48.
25. Brunetta, *Cent'anni di cinema italiano*, 327–8.
26. Mario Sesti, 'Sceneggiare per Pietrangeli: Conversazione con Ettore Scola,' in Micciché, '*Io la conoscevo bene' di Antonio Pietrangeli*, 25.
27. Brunetta, *Cent'anni di cinema italiano*, 402.
28. Lino Micciché, 'Su alcuni dati strutturali di *Io la conoscevo bene*,' in Micciché, '*Io la conoscevo bene' di Antonio Pietrangeli*, 113–22.
29. Stephen Gundle, *Bellissima: Feminine Beauty and the Idea of Italy* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), 177.
30. Sebastiano Gesù and Elena Russo, 'I personaggi femminili nel cinema di Pietrangeli,' in Giulio Martini, Guglielmina Morelli, and Giancarlo Zappoli (ed.), *Un'invisibile presenza: Il cinema di Antonio Pietrangeli* (Milan: Centro Studi Cinematografici/Il Castoro, 1998), 43.
31. '[P]op numbers, in the economy of the movie, do not convey criticism [of Adriana's world] as much as modern pathos. Songs transform the movie into a neo-melodrama and in some instances lead to epiphanic moments (as in Bertolucci).' Emiliano Morreale, *Cinema d'autore degli anni sessanta*, 154.
32. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 103.
33. 'Everything is always fine for her, she's always happy. She never wants anything, she is not envious of anybody, she has no curiosity. She is never surprised. She never feels humiliated even though, poor thing . . . she happens to be on a daily basis. Nothing has an effect on her and goes away leaving no trace, like on a waterproofed material. Zero ambitions. No morals, not even for money, because she is no prostitute. For her, yesterday and tomorrow do not exist. She does not even live day by day because doing so she would be forced to too complicated programs, so she lives minute by minute. Sunbathing, listening to records and dancing are her only activities. Apart from that, she is flighty, she always needs new and brief encounters, does not matter with whom: with herself, never.'
34. Patrizia Calefato, 'I costume,' in Gianni Canova (ed.), *Storia del cinema italiano*, Vol. XI 1965–1969 (Venice: Marsilio, 2002) 156.
35. Ermanno Comuzio, 'La musica nei film di Pietrangeli,' in Martini, Morelli, and Zappoli, *Un'invisibile presenza: Il cinema di Antonio Pietrangeli*, 32. Comuzio also insists on the 'dialectic' function of Pietrangeli's 'muzak.'
36. Maggie Günsberg, *Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 54.
37. Mariapia Comand, 'Dini Risi und die wunderbaren Lieder der Sirenen,' in Thomas Koebner and Irmbert Schenk (ed.), *Das goldene Zeitalter des italienischen Films* (München: text + kritik, 2008), 359.
38. Anita Angelone, 'Decelerating the Boom: Valerio Zurlini's *La ragazza con la valigia* (1961),' *Italian Culture* Volume XXVIII, Number 1, March 2010, 44.

4. IDEOLOGICAL PERIMETERS: THE CATHOLIC–MARXIST PROTOCOL

Before looking at the films, just a few historical notes on the ideological debate will probably help illuminate why liberalist intellectuals like Piero Gobetti deemed so crucial the 'individualist revolution of consciences'[1] if Italy wanted to develop economically, improve socially, and think ethically. The absence of political formations referring to Anglo-Saxon models of liberal democracy in terms of economic liberalism and concomitant advancement of individual freedom[2] perpetuated an ideological immobilism where the general tendency of delegating individual rights to other authorities such as the Church, parties, and unions thrived without adversaries. A Catholic–Marxist joint venture held the population – or the 'mass,' or the 'flock' – as generally incapable of making individual choices, especially in the sphere of civil liberties. In a country where there is no shortage of leisurely interactions, and social behavior seems especially oriented toward the satisfaction of materialist pleasures, everything points to a state of marginal religiosity; nonetheless, when not explicitly restricted, the individual sphere is still kept at bay by political forces trying to win the favors and the sponsorship of the Catholic hierarchies. The influence of the Vatican, perceiving any attempt to grant rights to its 'herd' as a loss of power and authority, was so pervasive that it created grotesque situations of coercion and violence against defenseless citizens; for example, the infamous article 339 of the Civil Code, labeled 'Guardian of the unborn child,' according to which it was possible, under the order of 'anyone having an interest' or of the prosecuting attorney, to nominate a guardian who would manage and 'take care' of the properties belonging to the unborn child if the

widow was pregnant at the time of the husband's death. The article was abolished only in 1975.

The theoretical reflection on Italy's exceptionalism, a 'third way' between capitalism and socialism was crippled by Catholic provisions, the ultimate role of the Church, and the necessity of pragmatic compromises with the PCI. Right after the war, when the DC essentially became a party of state-funds managers without any direct reference to the Gospel and the teaching of Christ, Catholic 'reservist' thinkers and activists – that is, not actively involved in party activity and generally disappointed by DC's ruthless *realpolitik* – interrogated the Catholic *intellighenzia* to elaborate a political philosophy capable of incorporating Christ in everyday actions and praxis. Apart from the implementation by Adriano Olivetti of some of economist Giuseppe Toniolo's ideas on the humanization of the assembly line, the results were practically inapplicable, but the Church was quick to condemn even the most endearingly worthy and deserving experiences, like Don Milani's school of the poor in Barbiana, as satanic flirting with Communists' evil ideology. Two examples of the indigestible mingling of Communist and Catholic dogmas, or *le due culture che solo del bene hanno fatto all'Italia,* act as foils to the utopian undercurrents in De Sica, Zavattini, and Rossellini, pointing to the historical pact to be shared by those Marxists and Catholics who had earned their grades during the Resistance and seemed to have an ethical structure to offer to the country as a future foundation. The first is an excerpt from an article written by Don Primo Mazzolari, author of the fundamental volume *Compagno Cristo* or *Comrade Christ*, and published on *Politica Sociale*, the weekly organ of Christian union leaders:

> Even though we criticize and oppose a pernicious materialism and atheism, we want to welcome the profound and Christian aspiration of a community of workers that, while still looking for a definitive economic and social structuring, demand a deep transformation, if not a complete overriding of the capitalist society.[3]

The second is a letter that writer, journalist, and legislator Mario Gozzini sent to Don Eugenio Valentini, scholar of socially engaged priests Giuseppe Cafasso and Giovanni Bosco. It is possible to appreciate the emergence of a figure that seems to be the inescapable curse of Italian politics, the perennial 'mediator' between *le due culture*:

> Now, it is precisely this uniform convergence between Church and State that makes me a left-wing person. To me, social struggle – let's even say class struggle – seems a reality, connected to the liberistic and therefore capitalist ordering of the world. It follows that, to reach that new integrality, it is necessary to take into account this reality, which is to go

> out from the dialectic constraint of class struggle. At this point you may object that it is possible to obtain that also from a right-wing perspective and may put forward a word: corporativism (or class collaboration). It seems to me that the fascist experience has taught this: class collaboration is a form of hypocrisy because the two sides are never, absolutely never on the same plane but one is always stronger . . . Look what happened inside the DC: where have the early days of reformist programs gone to? And isn't the ballyhooed interclassism also an illusion? Isn't it in this situation extremely appropriate to keep insisting, at least from a principle standpoint, on the spiritual necessity of the Left? For us Catholics the problem is not to guarantee to everybody a better living standard (materialism) but to understand the unfolding social movement, the same movement that found in the Russian revolution its most remarkable catalyst, and to reorient it towards spiritually positive results.[4]

Facilitating a process of power transfer from suffocating institutions to the individual was unthinkable for the two major forces that ruled Italy's political scene unchallenged until the late 1970s: the only 'bold economic and political acts' that it was possible to carry out derived from a competition where the emphasis was counteracting imagined repercussions more than making long-term programs. In retrospect, Crainz and other historians imply that mass political formations proved to be inadequate as early as the mid-1950s, and yet the geopolitical situation, together with a pragmatic alliance between the PCI and DC when it was time to marginalize other parties, all but delayed the emergence of possible alternatives. The latter in fact ostracized its true father, the very founder of the Partito Popolare, Don Luigi Sturzo, from which the Christian Democrats emanated, because of his unyielding opposition to state intervention in the economy, unwavering insistence on irreproachable conduct in the public sphere, individualistic acceptance of the message of Christ, and, most important, an inflexible pragmatism that would push Sturzo beyond the most topical divide for a Catholic, the unbending obedience to the Church. This hostility against liberalism in its acceptance of stripping collective organisms of a normative ethos is well rooted in many of the thinkers who founded modern Italian culture. Benedetto Croce, in a letter sent to Friedrich von Hayek, praised his *The Road to Serfdom* only to deliberately misinterpret his aversion for the state as entrepreneur and somehow affirm that von Hayek's economic analysis could not represent a good solution for Italy:

> I deem fundamental the freedom of moral conscience, which is the only one that decides; and I consider liberism and statalism ways of solving economic problems that apply to factual conditions and moral needs. In

> general, the good solution is individual initiative and free market, but it cannot be absolute as proved by the exceptions that even you admit.[5]

The Road to Serfdom is itself dogmatic and shall not serve as an economic Bible: every country has its own specificities and peculiarities, but the problem here is that Croce postulates exceptions, which in *The Road to Serfdom* simply are not present. Croce cannot admit that a truly free market is only the tip of the iceberg of a system of institutions and juridical conditions guaranteeing the existence of a good habitat for what the other founder of the Austrian marginalist school, Ludwig von Mises, called *catallaxis*, a concept borrowed from Herodotus and meaning the creation of a habitat where the conditions for a just exchange are met. Von Hayek prearranges a constellation of norms and institutions that are simply too much for Croce to endorse. In this sense, the capitalist market is a process of discovery requiring a set of norms guaranteeing equal access and its endorser is an individual who accepts its trade-offs, but in Italy's mixed economy the market has long been, if not the subaltern part to state intervention, a suspect entity that ought to be overbalanced by social guarantees and constant mediation where the state intervenes for some of its darlings, continuously creating dubious exceptions. This situation is the consequence of adopting the position proposed by post-Bismarck German thinkers, who subordinated the economy to politics, almost making it another branch of bureaucracy. Croce reconnects with an ancient tradition of suspicion against economic activity dating back to Plato and Cicero and constructs an ethical liberalism separated from 'economic' *liberismo* – a derogatory term coined in Italy to oppose the free market, seen as a perilous sea whose protagonists are modern pirates and buccaneers – saying that freedom can exist even in a system where private property of means of production is suppressed. A constant trend in socio-economic thought in postwar Italy is the obsession with limiting the power of the market to favor political influence and not the opposite.

The mantra of wholesale privatizations practiced by worshippers of 'voodoo economics' is an expression of ideological fanaticism: privatizing should occur only after an analysis of economic viability and if the dismission of state properties and services will have a positive effect on the competitiveness of the sector at issue. The point is that Croce does not see a problem in the other extreme, that is, state as the owner of the means of production, resulting in a limitation of economic and civil rights. Disintermediating practices are out of reach: the evolutionist nature of Scottish and Austrian liberalism, with their concepts of knowledge scattered throughout the social fabric, is not acceptable. Just as the years of liberalist policies after the unification were seen as an insignificant digression in the glorious path toward the *economia sociale di mercato*, entrusting citizens with the task of adopting their individual ethos was deemed too risky. After the successful sabotage against Don Luigi Sturzo,

the economic doctrine of Giuseppe Dossetti, proposer of a version of social market economy that could easily be misappropriated as assistentialism and clientelism even beyond its author's original intentions, gained ground as the principles inspiring the DC economic policies. Sturzo strenuously attacked all monopolies, in the state as well as in the private sector, and proudly stated his ideological affinity with liberalist Luigi Einaudi, who was also the target of furious attacks by Croce. Symbolically, Sturzo was the victim of one of the first consociative operations carried out by the PCI and the Christian Democrats, when the Sturzo Institute, whose founder always wanted to be supported by private sponsors, was quickly nationalized right after his death for electoral purposes and consequently 'infiltrated' by academicians that Sturzo himself explicitly refused to appoint when he was alive. In addition, Sturzo always objected to the inclusion of the word 'Christ' in the name of the party, first on the occasion of the foundation of the Partito Popolare in 1918 against the staunchly anti-Jewish Father Gemelli and then against Alcide De Gasperi when the latter founded the Christian Democrats.

It was easy for those in political power, who were not responsible for creating that safety net of juridical norms and conditions of equal access, to criticize the predatory behavior of the corporations or big owners storming the economic scene, and to mythologize the market with the connotations of robbery and loot, evoking Dickensian images of exploitation. In the same years, anti-Fascist journalist and intellectual Ernesto Rossi published an essay entitled *Abolire la miseria* (Let's Abolish Poverty) where, in mostly utopian fashion and not borrowing directly from von Hayek's concept of guaranteed minimum income, he theorized a rigid system of concrete measures made up of alimentary help and, most importantly, of access to schools and institutes in order for the underprivileged to gain knowledge, skills, and competence; in brief, to enter the world of culture, in a theoretical effort that tried to do away with the concepts of class and – indistinct – mass.[6] The attention to the poor, the underprivileged, or simply to those who did not have good fortune in their enterprising attempts is common to Sturzo and Rossi and points to a path of empowerment and growing responsibility that Italian politics was reluctant to travel, cajoling its constituencies like the people von Mises called the *risentiti* in *The Anti-Capitalistic Mentality*, creating a sense of entitlement to state-provided guarantees and compensations, looking for a social arrangement through posts earned without competition, behaving as though the challenges put out by the market and the trade-offs caused by globalization concern neither them nor the country. The lack of strategic vision can in turn lead to emergency cabinets like the one led by technocrat Mario Monti, sworn in after the fall of Silvio Berlusconi to remedy the disasters caused by an irresponsible political class and ward off a final crash by passing Draconian austerity measures.

All of the movements of dissent seemed to bear the stigma of the two dominant cultures, either reacting to them from within or extremizing their instances. The youth protest that gained momentum by the mid-1960s represented a mixture of rage and resentment with the option of a purely consumerist society. The protesters were dissatisfied with having political ideals bastardized by the parties but were already conscious of the vastly futile nature of the rebellion. It was a generation that used politics more than anything as a pretext to express anger and destructive will, but the movement ultimately proved incapable of bypassing the archaic ideological order and combining its vitalistic abandon with a new elaboration of the individual and his role in the new Italian society. The revolt against all paternalisms – in schools, factories, families, etc. – exhausted its thrust after the 'nihilistic' phase. Not that it happened because of a timely reply from Rome: harmonically fitting with the emphasis on Italy's lack of reform, Crainz quotes the ineffective measures taken by the government at the climax of the youth protests. The liberalization of university enrollment for students graduating from any type of high school was long overdue but proved to be rushed, if not demagogic, because often those students were not ready for higher education. Furthermore, the stark contrast with France, where a Gaullist minister was able to pass a law 'granting new options of self-government inside the universities, enhancing the importance of students' organization, and innovating interdisciplinary approaches and didactic experimentation,'[7] once again certified the failure of ultraconservative policies and the lack of a coherent vision for the future of the country.

Without establishing a homological determination between the sociopolitical attitudes and cinema, it can be argued that the anguished tone of the search for existential alternatives and for an escape from a disquieting present was exacerbated by ideological stagnation and unfit guidance. It is fascinating to look at the motivations behind those who chose to lead a criminal life and become bank robbers. *La banda Casaroli* (1962) by Florestano Vancini, showing events that took place in 1950, demonstrates that, even though Paolo Casaroli theorized for himself a role of 'great man above morals' à la Raskolnikov, the Casaroli gang – one of the members, Romano Ranuzzi, was a 'Lacombe, Lucien' who fought for the Resistance after being rejected by the National Guard of the Repubblica di Salò – was animated by 'heroic' ideals of brotherhood and by the Fascist vitalism of 'pursuing the beautiful death,' *a cercar la bella morte*. Carlo Lizzani's *Banditi a Milano* (1968), about the 1967 robbery of the Banco di Napoli branch in Milan by the gang led by Pietro Cavallero, shows a group of young men – one of them, Adriano Rovoletto, a former partisan fighter – of anarchist beliefs who rob banks for the narcissistic pleasure of wreaking havoc. Cavallero, previously a communist activist, would later convert to Catholicism in jail. Securing a collective pact with society seemed a common trait shared by students and other 'angry young men' and

by workers who, feeling as though they had no representation, were activating radical forms of protests and strikes and aggressively overtaking unions and official labor representatives, believed to be too divisive and not bold enough in their requests. The fading of any idealistic involvement with lofty aspirations just a few years after the war was already shown by the writer Natalia Ginzburg in her *Le voci della sera*, which was published in 1961 but whose events take place in the early 1950s. In this short novel, life flows quietly amidst miscommunication and indifference. Characters with a past marked by open endorsement of Fascism are casually asked to become members of the Left as though the carnage of invasions and deportations had not really happened, and Italy seems precipitated into a muffled atmosphere of modest happiness and quiet resignation.

The new men resulting from the economic upheavals seemed at first imbued with a general apathy toward the evolution of society: sociologists Ugoberto Alfassio Grimaldi and Italo Bertoni synthesized the aspirations of the new generation in the 'three M's'[8] *macchina*, *moglie*, *mestiere*, thereby declaring the acquiescence of Italian youths to very practical goals, without feeling the seductive power of politics, struggle, and ideology. But the new conformism, the persisting atmosphere of conservatism and the authoritarian approach toward the new generation proved to be the catalyst of a diffused sense of impatience, leading to the questioning of present leaders and past values in schools, universities, parties, industrial plants, and centers where culture was produced. For the generation that was now embracing the first significant leap toward prosperity the compromises seemed too harsh: the problem of adjusting to a rigid life perspective consisting of political apathy and obedient productivity emerged violently, without the support of a defined ideology. The borders of the protest movement were loose, its leaders receptive of the platforms that were developed abroad, grafting foreign slogans into agendas shaped by Catholic and/or Marxist militancy.

I would not totally embrace the thesis of Roberto Beretta of the newspaper *Avvenire*, organ of the Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (Union of Italian Bishops), who in his book *Cantavamo Dio è morto: Il '68 dei cattolici* states that the origins of our French May-1968-style confrontations had a consistent, organically Catholic origin, but even the visual evidence is striking, embodied by a famous picture of the youth movement leader and agitator Mario Capanna addressing a group of students outside the Università Cattolica in Milan in 1967. Capanna, who was able to enroll at the Catholic University thanks to letters of recommendation written by his bishop and parish priest describing his religious faith as so strong that very few others could match it, would later become an ideologist of the proletariat and elected secretary of the ultra-left party Democrazia Proletaria. In the picture, he looks like a poised and dignified clergyman, 'wearing a black trenchcoat, down to his

Figure 50 Florestano Vancini's *La banda Casaroli* (1962) attempts to probe the confusion of the war's aftermath, stressing the lack of social cohesion and the expectations generated by the economic uncertainties.

ankles, which he borrowed from a priest-assistant professor at the university.'[9] The uprising of the youth movement in 1968 did not only import from France the slogan 'vietato vietare' and in general the more anti-establishment demands. It started as an outburst of libertarian rebellion, but it ended as a wave of destruction and dogmatism. The origins of the movement once again see the two prevailing cultures merge in their utopian vision of a liberated society. For Marxists, it was the Chinese revolution that would disengage social, work, and private relationships (the well-known slogan 'il privato è politico') from the bureaucratic deadweight of the Soviet political apparatus; for Catholics, the 'Christ as the first socialist and revolutionary' watchword was revived, almost as a new wave after the egalitarian movements of the sixteenth century in Europe. Catholic lobbies like the right-wing *Comunione e Liberazione*, destined to play a strategic role in the occupation of key public administration posts in Northern Italy, were born around this turbulent time. The political formation of the extremists was strictly Marxist–Leninist, and very likely their Catholic upbringing did not provide the ideological thrust for their actions and crimes. However, a Catholic subtext often resurfaces in the personal and public stories of the brigatist leaders, sometimes with its rebuilding potential, like the forgiveness and subsequent support that father Adolfo Bachelet bestowed upon Anna Laura Braghetti,[10] who was one of Aldo Moro's guards and was in the commando that killed his brother Vittorio Bachelet. The subtext can be even more disturbing: Mara Cagol, who was sentimentally attached to Renato Curcio, main ideologue and founder of the Red Brigades, and who died in obscure circumstances during a police ambush in 1975, had the prototypical resumé of a good Catholic Italian girl, with prolonged stints in the Scouts and other Church-affiliated organizations. Also the Department of Sociology at the University of Trento, the first to be started in Italy, where Cagol and Curcio studied, saw the light only after a strenuous battle of the local dioceses. Marco Donat Cattin, son of the Christian Democrat minister Carlo Donat Cattin, was the executioner of judge Emilio Alessandrini in 1979; after being freed in 1987, he worked in the Catholic rehabilitation group for drug addicts Gruppo Exodus, founded by Don Antonio Mazzi, and accord-

ing to the words of the clergyman, his main worry was to be forgiven by the widow of Alessandrini.

The end of this rebellious season and the death of the dreams of an entire generation is symbolized by a powerful documentary entitled *Nudi verso la follia* (2004), showing five days of live music, drugs flowing, sudden and violent binges of proletarian dispossession of meals and other items in 1976 in Milan at Parco Lambro during the *VI Festa del proletariato giovanile*. It was a symbolic junction of two different periods: the happy, joyous discovery of a possible counterculture and the gloomy descent for many of those young participants into terrorism and drug addiction. It ended as a tragic cul-de-sac for, on one side, a generation that condemned both the cold Soviet bureaucratism and the Prague Spring in 1968, a heterogeneous movement without clear reference, incapable of handling the pressure and the requirements of a modernized country, or simply disheartened by the lack of suitable life projects; on the other side, a crystallized establishment of 'chosen ones' – university professors, politicians, industrialists, judges, bureaucrats – perpetuating their privileges and conservative mentality as given by natural right. Live commentators of those fights like journalist Enzo Forcella and historians like Crainz have emphasized the leitmotif of many similar struggles: the absence of an authoritative youth leadership capable of incorporating the new mentalities and acquisitional modes into a political elaboration. In fact, those who had the chance quickly joined the ranks of the side they were fighting.

Italy as *Mondo Piccolo*: The Breadth of Ideological Penetration

The false movement between the Catholic and Marxist cultures represented a psychological horizon in Italian cinema that was used as an instance of integration in the Don Camillo saga; as a cue for satire and the grotesque in Fellini and Ferreri; as an agonizing perimeter with few alternatives, from which it was hard to break through in Bertolucci; as a haven whose destruction sinks its refugees into a state of confusion in Vancini and the Taviani brothers for the Marxist declination; and as broader metaphors of future world orders in Pasolini. The 'idyllic' but panoptical nature of the Catholic-Marxist sphere of influence – 'Dio ti vede, Stalin no!' – can be appreciated in the series about Don Camillo and Peppone, showing a bucolic Italy irredeemably grounded in an ideologic prison where any individual choice is directed by two apparently diverging doctrines that in fact happily merge in a hybridized, paternalist form of repression. Don Camillo is the serial comedy of inclusion and normalization, provided that no rules and regulations sanctioned by the two authorities are broken: it is pink Neorealism at its best, as a mixture of White and Red. Don Camillo and Peppone are characters based on literary works of Giovannino Guareschi, in particular *Mondo Piccolo*, a collection of short stories that first

appeared in 1948. In that 'little world,' threatened by protests, emancipation, and the Concilio Vaticano II, even the faint drones of modernization arriving from the big cities are treated as a menacing thunder that promises unwanted change. From 1952 to 1965, the series had five episodes, with two further installments released in 1972 and 1983, and a solid twelve-episode TV series in Germany with Mario Adorf as Don Camillo. Even though the first two, directed by French cineaste Julien Duvivier, are probably the best packaged with the mechanisms of screwball comedy, *Il compagno Don Camillo* (1965) by Luigi Comencini contains one of the most interesting passages:

> [Don Camillo and Peppone are with some fugitives who refuse to go back to the Soviet Union]
> Don Camillo: Just out of curiosity, what do you want to do with them?
> Peppone: Take them to the Russian embassy to return them to their legitimate owner.
> Don Camillo: Each human being has one and only one owner, himself.

In *Mondo Piccolo*, Don Camillo is a traditionalist priest. The fact that he is the only one speaking with Christ confirms the relation of sole agency in force between God and his trustees; however, Comencini was capable of redeeming a work he directed with his left hand only to repay a debt he owed producer Angelo Rizzoli by having Don Camillo bypass God and grant self-determination to man. Guareschi chose the material for the second half of *La rabbia* (1963, the first segment was edited by Pasolini), a film employing documentary footage from the 1940s and the 1950s that attempted to answer the historical-existential question regarding man's state of discontent and fear in a world seemingly very close to another devastating war. While Pasolini's tone is lyrical and gentle, characterized by an internationalist and ecumenic approach, Guareschi's contempt for non-Western nations and cultures has the racist tone of a minstrel show.

The first filmmaker who had the courage to go beyond a celebration, a criticism, or a satire of the country's ideological stagnation, mired in the parochial debate between institutionalized Catholicism and Marxism, was Roberto Rossellini with *Francesco Giullare di Dio* and *Europa '51*. With the anti-fascist alliance staged in *Roma città aperta*, Rossellini had already proved his transformational use of ideology: the Communist hero and Catholic martyr are instruments of freedom; their personal beliefs are sacrificed not for the gain of their faction but for the effacement of Fascist mythology (a similar treatment is in Aldo Vergano's *Il sole sorge ancora*, made in 1946). Rossellini achieves full command of his elegant naturalism with *Francesco giullare di Dio* (1950). As noted by Federico Luisetti, the movie is a collision of temporalities, with the Franciscan friars patiently harmonizing the rhythms of things in

nature with their anarchist view of religion as respect, humility, and peace. *Francesco giullare di Dio* is a complex reflection on religiosity: on the one hand we have the nonprofessional actors, the refusal of conventional narrative in favor of elliptical transitions, and open endings for each vignette; on the other the epiphany, the mystic moment of being and self-awareness à la Leopold Bloom experienced by the tyrant Nicolaio when confronted by the gentle self-nullification of the diminutive Fra' Ginepro. Later, with *Europa '51* (1952), 'Rossellini was trying to strike out into new territory, a territory that would exceed the limitations of binary thinking.'[11] Ingrid Bergman plays Irene, the wife of an American industrialist who after her son's suicide abandons her previous life revolving around parties and social events to devote herself to others. Marginalized and held as a lunatic by family, organized religion, doctors, and any other form of power she encounters, Irene sees her Foucauldian trajectory end in a psychiatric institution where she is finally put away. The death of the child is not only a personal tragedy, it is also the death of Europe. The children who, just a few years earlier, at the end of *Roma città aperta* were reclaiming the city and cleansing it from the Fascist mythology here have no hope whatsoever and must choose a premature annihilation as in *Germania anno zero*. Irene's painful journey is that of a new Christ: the repressive organs of social control play, at best, the part of Pilate. It is unclear whether the resemblance between Alfred Brown, the asylum priest, and Fernandel from *Don Camillo* is intentional because both films came out in 1952, but Rossellini exposes the clash between two irreconcilable missions, that of hypocritical preservation and that of knowledge, acceptance, and awareness. After the recognizable parallelism, Irene's absolute freedom is intolerable for the Church: her spiritual ascesis shatters the tacit acceptance of a dehumanizing present and turns her into a Lévinasian heroine selflessly offering her love to everybody. Once again, Rossellini's characters see things that other people do not see and end up being locked in a confined space where they cannot disrupt the triumphant march of coercion and annihilation of the other.

After the co-direction of *Luci del varietà*, it was then Federico Fellini who claimed the baton from Rossellini's hands with his first feature *Lo sceicco bianco* (1952). There is probably no direct influence from Luis Buñuel's *Susana* (1951), but the two works are eerily similar in their satire of Catholic culture and the repressive effect on psyche and behavior. If in Buñuel's movie Susana is the excessive woman who shakes the patriarchal order with her 'abnormal' sexuality, in *Lo sceicco bianco* the narrative device that creates a detour in the young couple's honeymoon and a family meeting in Rome, with a papal hearing thrown in for good measure, is the bride's obsession with her favorite photostory's character, the white sheik of the title. At the end of the movies, both Susana's destabilizing presence and Wanda's shenanigans – cast as an odalisque and almost seduced during a shooting of the photostory, she ends up

in a mental hospital after aimless late-night wandering and a suicide attempt – are satirically erased by complications with fake happy endings in which life goes on as nothing has happened, 'the way a bad dream is blocked from conscious memory.'[12] There is even a similarity in the way state apparatuses come to the rescue to sanction family unity: the police are the *deus ex machina* in *Susana*, by dragging her away and returning her to the reformatory from which she escaped, and they also play a significant role in *Lo sceicco bianco* when Wanda is put in a hospital room, still scantily dressed, and the final confrontation with the husband takes place on a bed, the characters not sharing physical contact, separated by a crucifix on the wall. The fictional character of marriage and eternal love is enacted literally in the last scene where, also in reference to a letter that Wanda had written to the *sceicco bianco*, she tells her husband that 'he is her white sheik.' The movie ends with the entire family triumphantly marching toward the Vatican chambers, '[b]ut, it is evident that their firm order is all but fallacious . . . In fact, patriarchal/Catholic morals come across as a rather conspicuous mask.'[13] Fellini watches his creatures from above with affectionate tenderness, but behind those warm feelings it becomes natural to identify the sanctimony of familial despotism. When in 2010 in Strasbourg, on the occasion of the appeal requested by the Italian government against a previous pronouncement of the European Court for Human Rights ruling on the removal of all crucifixes from public buildings, law professor and attorney of the Italian state Joeseph Weiler said, 'Italy without crucifixes? It wouldn't be Italy anymore.'[14] No one could have expressed with more pointed words Italy's contested identity and cultural indebtedness to external spheres of influence.

Three years later, with *Il bidone* (1955), Fellini delivered the most devastating blows against the superstitious nature of Italian religiosity without showing a real priest or a church. The protagonists of *Il bidone* are conmen roaming the countryside near Rome and taking advantage of credulous, gullible people. They pretend to be clergymen, staging the retrieval of bones and precious jewelry found in the land belonging to simple-minded peasants. After announcing the dead man's will to celebrate masses in his name, they ask for money in exchange for the fake jewels. Augusto, played by Broderick Crawford, is at the same time commanding and pathetic, intimidating and dejected, enmeshed in a soul-searching trajectory at the end of which, right before his death, he will find salvation. Once again dressed as a Monsignor, he learns that the money just stolen from an unwary family of peasants was meant for their paralyzed daughter, a little girl who ecstatically welcomes the austere wisdom and authority exuding from him. Augusto tries to hide the loot, but his fellow swindlers furiously beat him and leave him moribund at the bottom of a ravine, where he finally dies in peace after seeing a quietly joyous procession with little kids at the head: their immaculate innocence seems to remind

Augusto that a different, pure community is possible, and with those sweet images filling his eyes he finally dies, after whispering 'I'm coming with you!' Through Augusto's perfect and tragic impersonation of a moral beacon, Fellini suggests that organized religion is only a competition in masquerading, once again pointing at a deeper, spiritual imperative, a personal need that no religious lobby can capture.

Those journeys into life's basest moments, when characters confront their fears, sink deeper, and then emerge with a renewed faith in life after a painfully critical introspection seemed possible in the 1950s but already out of touch with reality in the 1960s. The way Catholic power historicized itself to become an all-embracing ideological tutor was shown by Marco Ferreri; for instance, in his *Una storia moderna – L'ape regina* (1963), which is more than a corrosive commentary on the suffocating and hypocritical nature of Catholic marriage and illustrates the obtrusive nature of religion from birth to death. Ferreri shows the family priest acting as a counselor and admonishing about 'new duties,' the ever-present dome of Saint Peter – reassuring in Claudio Gora's *Tre straniere a Roma* (1958), ironic in Ettore Scola's *Se permettete parliamo di donne* (1964), now static and indifferent like a metaphysical given – impending on Ugo Tognazzi's life with the simple-minded family of Regina, Tognazzi's wife in the movie, played by Marina Vlady, where faith is just a matter of tradition, alienation and folk wisdom in its quest to drum up new clients. In general, the omnipervasiveness of regressive cultures and the suffocating nature of Italian familialism are held as insurmountable hindrances to discovery and self-realization. Pietro Germi's *Signore e signori* (1966) is an example of Italy's specificity for the relationship between filmic language and the encumbrance of socio-ideological power structures. Germi was often dismissed as a heavy-handed moralist, whose traditional values and traditional cinematography – as a minor epigon of Neorealism – were not compatible with innovative breakthroughs in the history of the medium. But Germi was a skilled negotiatior in the urgency with which he exposed backward behaviors and stylistic research, striving to do away with naturalistic practices and theatrical realism. When it came out, *Signore e signori* seemed completely outdated in respect to the French New Wave, thanks to a plot loaded with cuckholded husbands, cheating wives, and provincial pettiness. The film is not a *pochade*, like Germi's previous *La presidentessa* (1952); at the end, the director and screenplay writers Luciano Vincenzoni, Age, Scarpelli, and Ennio Flaiano succeed in conveying a bleak, icy feeling of horror and disgust toward the main characters, impassibly mean and cruel when it comes to reducing other people who seem to enjoy a glimpse of happiness and freedom in their worldview. *Signore e signori* feels like an *ante litteram* response to Robert Altman's *Short Cuts*: the same mastery in assembling the narrative jigsaw, the same exhilarating pace, the same nakedness, literal and moral, of the characters. The difference is that Germi creates

characters who do not have to confront the serendipitous whims of destiny but are forced to pickax the wall of falseness and conformism as soon as they threaten the order of things. The second segment of the film pits a pusillanimous accountant (Gastone Moschin) against his hysterically aggressive wife (Nora Ricci): Germi explores the strategies of violence and blackmail that the community and the Catholic Church exert on the husband to break ties with the young girl (played by Virna Lisi) he has fallen for. Director and screenwriters show the incestuous relations between religion and economy (Moschin works for the bank Credito Cattolico Euganeo and is essentially prosecuted by his employer because of his new, unorthodox family); religion and state repression (Moschin is taken into custody and accused of abandonment of the conjugal home); religion and media (in the third episode, the underage girl is sexually preyed on by five men, the calls are made to the local paper in order to have some names expunged); and religion and the justice system (again in the third episode, the five count on a Monsignor to intercede for them in Rome). Ultimately, the Church is seen as a lobby thriving on fear and misery, enslaving (the local priest's name is the revealing Don Schiavon) its parishioners for purely financial reasons. The end of the Moschin episode is similar to the pre-finale of *Divorzio all'italiana*, with a reunion in the hospital – in the Sicilian movie it took place at the train station – where he has been recovering after his girlfriend was driven out of town and he tried to commit suicide. The mob of people – consisting of friends, family and random representatives of the community – menacingly marching toward Moschin alludes to a cultural cohesion smothering one's subjectivity in the name of purity and molding it in the name of control.

One of the most luminous examples of Italian new wave cinema, Bernardo Bertolucci's *Prima della rivoluzione* (1964) is a chronicle of the shortcomings of identity formation when the only option is an ideological oscillation between Catholic bourgeoisie and Marxist militancy. *Prima della rivoluzione* centers around some episodes from the life of Fabrizio, a young man who, before being reabsorbed into his class of origin by getting married in church to a wealthy high-school sweetheart, entertains an incestuous relationship with his mother's younger sister and negligently toys with revolutionary ideas. Bertolucci borrows names and locations from Stendhal's *La chartreuse de Parme*: just like its protagonist Fabrizio Del Dongo, who in the midst of the Waterloo battle lets his unbridled horse run the dusty field specked with blood and corpses, Fabrizio remains adrift in his vain aspirations and turmoils, incapable of taking a firm grasp on life. But Fabrizio is also reminiscent of the protagonist of *Le rouge et le noir*, Julien Sorel, son of a humble carpenter but a staunch admirer of Napoleon and imbued with fervent Jacobin ideas. Julien does not hesitate to embrace the hypocrisy of the religious career simply to ascend the social ladder and spitefully prove his worth and superior capa-

bilities to people of higher classes, who, for him, would normally be out of reach. Like Julien, Fabrizio seems to abandon his revolutionary stance, only to discover that in fact it is only a different brand of conformism akin to the pharisaic, exhausted rituals celebrated by his fellow citizens. The love affair with his neurotic aunt Gina, played by Adriana Asti, an innocent and fragile creature who refuses to graduate to the symbolic, would be a traumatic option well beyond the revolution he fantasizes about: after his marriage he will be able to pursue his political career and forget about trying to be a misfit. *Prima della rivoluzione* takes to virtuoso perfection some of the formal devices of the French New Wave and its philosophical approach to the image: Characters are investigated in their theatricality, as if the eccentric gestuality of their movements and their genuine and unfiltered outbursts of sorrow, anguish, fleeting hope, or joy can provide direct access to the interior truth of the characters. There is also an echo of the Marcello-Steiner relationship from *La dolce vita* in the rapport between Fabrizio, his friend Agostino, and his mentor, the Marxist intellectual Cesare, whose existence is suspended until the revolution comes and now lives as an outcast in the undertow of history, symbolically spending his time on the banks of the river that flows around Parma. While Agostino is a nervous youth with a dysfunctional family who commits suicide by drowning in the river, Cesare is a pathetic figure whose teachings seem completely useless and out of sync with the people around him, a romantic vestige of an archeological past whose characteristics are fossilized entertainment just like the opera Fabrizio watches with his wife at the end of the movie. 'What did the party do for Agostino?' Fabrizio asks after he learns of his friend's death, a question that behind its apparent humanism hides the futility of ideological engagement as a necessary stage before one learns that any certainty about his own identity is bound to dissipate. The last 3.09 minutes of the movie, a frantic montage of memories and episodes from the past driving the plot to its conclusion, with Fabrizio's marriage and Gina's departure, are among the finest achievements of Italian cinema. If Fabrizio is the perfect example of a failed intellectual whose theoretical instruments are too backward for a persuasive social analysis, Adriana Asti towers over the rest of the actors as a character capable of creating an entire world and of communicating the anxiety of an entire historical moment. In Mauro Bolognini's *Un bellissimo novembre* (1969) – as in *Prima della rivoluzione* – Nino, a tormented adolescent, becomes the lover of his aunt then rejoins the ranks of 'normalcy' by marrying a nondescript cousin. But a true process of maturation cannot take place without severing the umbilical cord that keeps Nino hooked to his town, his family, even his country – before leaving for the UK, one of his cousins tells Nino that Italy and responsible adulthood are incompatible: 'In England you will be yourself . . . if you make a mistake it will be your fault.'

When the distance between archaic Catholicism, technological advancement,

Figures 51 and 52 In *Le italiane e l'amore* (1961), love is often a collective spectacle: a funeral (top, Fig. 51) or a theatrical performance on the street. Affection cannot be separated by social representation, offering women as victims and commodities (Fig. 52).

and the soothing popularity of mass entertainment grew to paradoxical heights, filmmakers explored the displacing, alienating effect of that Italy going at different speeds. The most plastic exhibition of sexuality as belonging to the public sphere is the film-inquiry *Le italiane e l'amore* (1962), a portmanteau project where eleven directors tackle different sensitive cruces and subsequent legal problems regarding the family and sex. *Le italiane e l'amore* portrays masculinity as a manipulative power, but also showcases combative women ready to break through and dismiss exploitative cultural codes.

Paolo and Vittorio Taviani tackled the issue of denied civil rights with *I fuorilegge del matrimonio* (1963). In this film the Taviani brothers infused the Neorealist approach with Brechtian techniques of engagement and provocation to condemn a nation that cannot defend its workers and delegates family rights to a foreign country. In *I fuorilegge del matrimonio* the devastating, perverted form of subsidiarity between Italy and the Vatican is expressed by the Foucauldian plight of Ugo Tognazzi, trying to divorce a woman believed dead but in fact turned nun. The absurd violence generated by the lack of individual rights is inscribed on Tognazzi's imploring body, bounced from the police to the judiciary to the church to the police again. The dramatic cultural stagnation spurred filmmakers to organize their critique even around tradi-

tionally neglected genres, with religion literally becoming a branch of science fiction. After *I fuorilegge del matrimonio*, *I sovversivi* (1967) and *Sotto il segno dello scorpione* (1969) centered on the conflicted debate about the Left's perspectives, its 'struggle between Conservation and Utopia,'[15] and startlingly implied that politicians were appointed with the responsibility of defining the worldview of a generation. From an anarco-libertarian standpoint, it was Tinto Brass's *Il disco volante* (1964) that brilliantly used the fantastic and unexpected – a flying saucer landing in a provincial town in the ultra-Catholic north-east of Italy – as a metaphor for cultural backwardness, class domination, and general repression. In the rural town where the UFO appears – mockingly depicted as a community of quasi-lunatics, full of hatred for Rome and with ridiculous cultural aspirations – all the members who declare seeing or interacting with the aliens are silenced or thrown into jail. The only person who actually manages to seize a Martian – a poor widow with numerous offspring, played by Silvana Mangano – tries to sell him to the son of the local landowner, a bitter countess who charges the widow with fraud and sends her own son to a mental institution.

The Marxist–Catholic ideological perimeter is like a sandbox from which escape is forbidden. *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964) by Pier Paolo Pasolini looks almost like the product of a Marxist devout atheist, one for whom God does not exist but is necessary, dedicated with no ironic intentions to Pope John XXIII, author of the smartest tactical retreat in the history of the Church. Pasolini had already declared with *La ricotta* (1963) his contradictory bond with popular religiosity. In spite of his resentment against the abusive, colonizing practices of the Church, Pasolini is fascinated by its capacity to intercept the raw, sweet sentiment of abandon and hope – in other words, he cannot leave to the Church the 'monopoly of good'; he is not disposed to acknowledge the innate need of spirituality he sees in man as exclusive property of the Vatican hierarchies. In *La ricotta*, the insertion of living pictures replicating two descents from the cross by Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino signifies the contemporary, dramatic indifference to the sacred, caused by mass culture and consumption: a literal illustration of the loss of the aura from the work of art, participation in a tableaux vivant is reduced to a striptease or a pop number, where the literal fall of Christ to the ground is met with blasphemous laughter. Pasolini further perspectivizes the use of mannerist painting by including a version of himself, played by Orson Welles. This self-reflexive moment is aimed at conveying the problematic nature of Pasolini's solidarity with the army of poor, rejected, hungry people of the Third World: marking the aristocratic distance that separates the stand-offish director who still fancies himself as Marxist even though he knows he is only a cog in the cultural industry, Pasolini succeeds in not orientalising the marginal. One may graft Pasolini's reactualization of Renaissance and mannerist painting onto the debate about

the 'authentic' national tradition. Andrea Mirabile has noticed the Gramscian motif of vivification of artistic and literary past, potentially turning the dead letter of old cultural artifacts into a source of class consciousness:

> Indeed, the intention of Pasolini in *Gli affreschi di Piero a Arezzo* and in many other points of his vast works seem to recover this forgotten past and make it newly productive from an intellectual standpoint, on the one hand as a generically national and interclassist reservoir of knowledge and awareness, on the other hand as a specific, potentially revolutionary platform for the proletariat.[16]

Loyal to his heretic persona, Pasolini is not concerned with the substantiation of the Logos into flesh, but rather, like Bishop Nestorius in the fifth century, with its human nature: in particular, Pasolini is not interested in Christ as a pacifier but brings out his role as a war-bringer. The watershed that is Christ's descent to earth does not lie in the theological aspect of the doctrine of salvation but in the divine nature of his revolutionary actions, inflexibly hard toward the Pharisees and loving toward the poor and the rejected. The provocation of *Il Vangelo* and its mythical realism – a committed, performative realism – is that it portrays an interpretation of Catholicism that has always been minoritarian in the Church. Pasolini knows that his Christ has traits in common with the silent prophet facing the grand inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov*, and in contemporary Italy he would have been met with contempt, but, more than anything else, with a lethal indifference. Before his death, Pasolini was working on a movie transposing the life of St. Paul into the contemporary Western world, seen as ethically stagnant and necessitating a purifying shock. The movie, we read in the book describing the project, called *San Paolo* and published in Turin by Einaudi in 1977, was supposed to start with scenes from occupied Paris 1938–44, instituting a parallel between the Roman domination that St. Paul destroys with his religious message and the Nazi occupants, flanked by the loyalists of Pétain. It is noteworthy that Pasolini, insisting on St. Paul as a revolutionary, decides to ignore his role as the initiator of the anti-semitic current in the Catholic Church as noted by, among others, Freud in *Moses and Monotheism*. In his search for an organic ethical principle bypassing individual responsibility, Pasolini is a creationist who subordinates self-determination to an order of necessity.

Among others, the 'docu-surveys' realized in the 1960s exploring new social anxieties include *I misteri di Roma* (1963), supervised by Zavattini, in which fifteen young directors deal with daily life in Rome; Ugo Gregoretti's *I nuovi angeli* (1962), a memorable journey of discovery – industrialization, youth cultures – into four Italian regions; Enzo Biagi's *Italia proibita* (1963), a powerful inquiry into social issues and the (mis)application of political bills, a film rated

'not recommended for any audience' by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico; Luciano Emmer's *La distrazione* (1965), dealing with the desires and neuroses of Milan's youths. The most famous documentary is Pasolini's *Comizi d'amore* (1964), a survey carried out with cinéma vérité techniques investigating the role and state of sexuality in the consciousness of Italian people, their relationship with the idea of family and nation, and the dramatic importance of the pedagogy of concealment in a predominantly Catholic society. *Comizi d'amore* successfully exposes a form of self-censorship implemented by Catholic teachings, not only the well-known views about sexual intercourse exclusively tolerated as an attempt at procreation or the hostility toward homosexuality, but also the attention to avoiding any form of scandal and therefore conforming to socially accepted opinions when speaking in front of the camera. The movie puts on display the 'form of acting, learned as inherent to conformity'[17] that works as a defense mechanism the interviewees deploy in order not to feel too displaced from their peers and from the society they know.

Like Pasolini, Liliana Cavani was interested in a creative, disrupting, sublime but grounded among the people and uncompromising faith; at the same time, she was capable of keeping the dialogue open with the religious *auctoritates*. In the medieval chronicle *Francesco di Assisi* (1966), Cavani 'stages a performance of absolute freedom in revolt, an existential and poetic example enacted in the image of the perilous adventure . . . Francesco's marginality encompasses a notion of open morality against the bounds of hierarchical judgment.'[18] With her St. Francis, Cavani basically argues that the Order is only fronting for the Church's fraudulent activities. Pasolini accused Cavani of leaving out the 'oriental' aspect of Francis' life, the miserable people and the miracles, occidentalizing his figure into a man of action. As an *alter Christus*, Cavani's Francis is a visionary creating an option of open individuality against hierarchical power, and basically agrees with Paul Sabatier's idea of the saint as a charismatic leader ready to be made an instrument of the Church.

Notes

1. Piero Gobetti, 'Il nostro protestantesimo,' in *La Rivoluzione Liberale* 4, May 17, 1925, now in Paolo Spriano (ed.), *Scritti politici* (Turin: Einaudi, 1960), 823–6.
2. The first of such formations was the Partito Radicale, which had representatives elected for the first time in 1976. However, for its entire life the movement has been centered on the charismatic figure of Marco Pannella, turning the party into a pseudo-cult.
3. Primo Mazzolari, 'Impedire il risorgere del fascismo,' *Politica Sociale*, Year II, No. 30, July 27, 1947.
4. Mario Gozzini, letter to Don Eugenio Valentini dated July 31, 1952 conserved in the Fondo Gozzini and now quoted in Giambattista Scirè, 'Il carteggio Don Milani-Gozzini,' in *Rivista di storia del cristianesimo*, 2 (2005), 3.

5. Benedetto Croce, letter to Friedrich von Hayek, February, 9 1945, b. 16, fasc. 50, Hoover Foundation Archive, Hayek Papers.
6. When Rossi accused Sturzo of being 'un liberista manchesteriano,' some sort of outlaw not wanting any sort of market regulation, an advocate of the *laissez-faire* and *laissez-passer* that created huge disparities between the different actors in the economic field, Sturzo vehemently replied, affirming his emphasis on social security as well as his strenuous opposition to every sort of monopoly, and the validity of a participatory, nonrestricted capitalism, open to society, and adding another pivotal idea revolving around stock options being accessible to workers. In August and September 1920, Italy was shaken by long and violent strikes. To solve the opposition of capital and market, Sturzo hypothesized a form of co-participation of the strikers in the capital and the profits, as well as the risk, of enterprise. What he had in mind was in fact an economic development model consisting of full collaboration and coresponsibility. To stop the strikes, Italy's prime minister, Giovanni Giolitti, did not accept Sturzo's proposal, but he instead flirted with and then seemed to welcome Filippo Turati's Bolshevik project – Turati was the secretary of the Socialist Party – of workers' complete control over factories. The threat of being dispossessed of the factories scared Italy's capitalists and pushed them to find another political interlocutor and consequently to endorse the secretary of the Fascist Party, Benito Mussolini, making him for the first time the tutor of order and the referent of big industry. According to Sturzo, economic freedom has the same dignity as other individual rights
7. Guido Crainz, *Il paese mancato: Dal miracolo economico agli anni ottanta* (Rome: Donzelli, 2003), 287.
8. Ugoberto Alfassio Grimaldi and Italo Bertoni, *I giovani degli anni sessanta* (Bari: Laterza, 1964), 382, quoted by Andrea Rapini in Paolo Sorcinelli and Angelo Varni (ed.), *Il secolo dei giovani: Le nuove generazioni e la storia del Novecento* (Rome: Donzelli, 2004), 97.
9. Roberto Beretta, *Cantavamo Dio è morto: il '68 dei cattolici* (Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 2008), 64.
10. Some Italian filmmakers insisted on the terrorists' incapacity to take full responsibility for their actions. Mimmo Calopresti cast Valeria Bruni Tedeschi as the Red Brigade affiliate Lisa Venturi in his 1996 film *La seconda volta*. When meeting his former victim, played by Nanni Moretti, the terrorist states 'many people were asking us to do what we did.' Later, in Marco Bellocchio's masterpiece *Buongiorno, notte* (2003) on Aldo Moro's kidnapping, the character molded around the memories left by Braghetti is reduced to an automaton whose apparent crisis of conscience turns into puerile, dream-like fantasies. As in a fairy tale, Chiara, played by Maya Sansa, wishes she could just pour a narcotic into the soup that will be eaten by the commando holding Moro prisoner so she will be able to free the politician. It should also be noted that, in a recent TV interview with journalist Mario Adinolfi, former terrorist Sergio D'Elia emphatically asked 'Why did the state let us do what we did,' again trying to escape from the movement's responsibilities.
11. Peter Brunette, *Roberto Rossellini* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 148.
12. Ernesto R. Acevedo Muñoz, *Buñuel and Mexico: The Crisis of National Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 93.
13. Ibid. 93.
14. Luigi Offeddu, 'L'Italia senza crocifissi? Non sarebbe più l'Italia,' *Corriere della Sera*, July 1, 2010.
15. Lorenzo Cuccu, *Il cinema di Paolo e Vittorio Taviani: Natura, cultura, storia nei film dei due registi toscani* (Rome: Gremese, 2001), 24.

16. Andrea Mirabile, *Scrivere la pittura: La 'funzione Longhi' nella letteratura italiana* (Ravenna: Longo, 2009), 82–3.
17. Marcia Landy, *Italian Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 226.
18. Gaetana Marrone, *The Gaze and the Labyrinth: The Cinema of Liliana Cavani* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 36.

5. NEGOTIATING MODERNITY: THE ETHICS OF DISORIENTATION AND ENTRENCHMENT

Neorealism's ethical approach was about granting citizenship to the common man – his language, his habits, his struggles – making sure that 'art' was not disconnected from him or, more importantly, that art did not formulate his presence as scandalous or exotic. For the first time the average man is the subject of cinema and with the purported intention to represent authentically his milieu. However, while the focus on the Zavattinian *disoccupato* was original, one must question if the viewer was really privy to his nuances or simply to the filmmaker's vision of this new subject. The ethical edification of the country had one of its key moments in the new devotion toward work, 'a manifest respect for the world of work'[1] writes Gian Piero Brunetta, commenting on the years of Neorealism, a respect that will surprisingly and almost immediately be replaced, according to Brunetta, by a cynical indifference epitomized by a famous scene in *I vitelloni* (1953) where Alberto Sordi mocks workers in a field. Work ceases to be an enticing theme already in the early 1960s, ridiculed in Ugo Gregoretti's *Omicron* (1963), a sci-fi comedy with many undeveloped observations on Italian society – people 'feeding themselves' with tears (a scene shot in a hospital chapel), the ultimate uselessness of class struggle, etc.

Setting aside unemployment and meager pensions, by the late 1950s directors seemed more concerned with their subjects' lack of agency and attempted to show the futility of their situation: with few exceptions, characters were putting up half-hearted fights and defeat was already clear. Among the actors cast in the aforementioned *Una storia milanese* was a young Ermanno Olmi in

the role of Turchi, a shy and graceful student discreetly courting Valeria. Olmi proved one of the most original and successful filmmakers in creating a form of true realism whose *condicio sine qua non* for effectiveness and authenticity was the attention to the transitioning collective ethos and dehumanizing instances in the burgeoning new nation. Olmi portrayed this ethos by examining his protagonists as they negotiate loss and opportunity. He was also a master of abrupt cuts and documentary takes that emphasize the all-embracing nature of his vision and deal with the casualties of industrialization while objectively looking at the perspectives of workers and low-rank clerks. Early in his career, with *Il posto* and *I fidanzati* (1963), Olmi polished to perfection a shot-cut structure wherein 'the narrative form in which [the scenes] are presented suggests an illustrative montage, which stresses the typicality rather than the uniqueness of the behavior depicted.'[2] His technique suggested a loss of individuality resulting in deprived relational codes duplicated with the family, at work, and during hours of leisure. *Il posto*, directed in 1961, and its depiction of the young protagonist's alienated routines, as a cog that has not 'discovered' his class consciousness, resonates with the uncertain redefinition of values and aspirations that had been taking place since the mid-1950s.

For our purposes, *I fidanzati* is pertinent as an example of the possible coexistence of rural and industrial Italy, of local regional cultures and ultramodern plants that could represent a chance for modernization and personal emancipation without joining the ranks of the *cattedrali nel deserto* and possibly hinting at the glorious industrial past Sicily had in previous centuries, when the region was able to attract plenty of foreign capital. The story of Giovanni, a specialized factory worker sent from the North to Sicily, and the strain that absence causes on his relationship with Liliana, goes beyond the representation of a sentimental journey with its ups and downs: the final reconciliation, sealed by the epistolary exchange, is also a reconciliation of cultures, where industrialization works as a facilitator in determining people's wishes and true feelings. Portrayed as tentative and indecisive as he questions his own thoughts and actions throughout the movie – how important is Liliana for him? What is the best way to arrange the last years of his old father's life? – in the end Giovanni feels stronger because of the headway he makes in the factory: work does not drain Giovanni emotionally, and *I fidanzati* conjures up an optimistic, virtuous model where man can further his career and personal sphere of affections. Displaying the usual mastery in alternating extremely short takes with longer sequences, Olmi creates the editing equivalent of a pause that alternates from a nervous to a more relaxed mood, as in the celebrated opening scene of the decrepit dancehall. It is an example of Olmi's montage of anthropomorphic details through which he is capable of creating the impression of an entire universe while at the same time facilitating a more personal perception of Christian humanity. But Olmi's cinema is far from being ordinary

or didascalic: *I fidanzati* is cinema of wandering and seeing in which editing shatters continuity and opens up the narratives in multiple directions.

The bucolic setting of pink Neorealist and countryside comedies, and the idyllic urban settings of genre movies of the early 1950s were to give way to the wasteland of new, faceless spaces where modern tragedies were going to be staged. Their protagonists were marginalized *borgatari* whose only chance at social 'redemption' was to be co-opted into the lower strata of a petty bourgeoisie. With *Accattone* (1961) and *Mamma Roma* (1962), Pasolini created a *ragazzi di vita* template that was passed to Mauro Bolognini for *La giornata balorda* (1961) – and before that, Bolognini also made *La notte brava* (1959) with Pasolini as one of the screenwriters –, to Paolo Heusch and Brunello Rondi for *Una vita violenta* (1962), to Bernardo Bertolucci for *La commare secca* (1962), and to Gian Rocco and Pino Serpi for *Milano nera* (1961), based on a Pasolini script entitled *La nebbiosa*. One could add Federico Fellini's *Le notti di Cabiria* with Pasolini providing expertise for the prostitutes' jargon. Pasolini also contributed to Luciano Emmer's *La ragazza in vetrina*, made in 1960: Emmer began his career almost as a pink Neorealist *ante litteram*, but *La ragazza in vetrina*, focusing on the work and amorous relationships of two Italian miners in Belgium, is a quantum leap in his filmography, where next to more traditional twists and turns there are disconnected episodes and unpredictable characters. The most bizarre of this group is *Milano nera*, and not only for the Northern setting. Gian Rocco made only two other movies in his career: the documentary *Carosello spagnolo* in 1959 and *Giarrettiera colt* in 1968, a bland parody of spaghetti westerns. Like *La dolce vita* or *Il disordine*, *Milano nera* is a *via crucis* with no redemption, getting worse from station to station, in this particular case for a gang of five angry young Milanese men. The apparently improvisational atmosphere, the adherence to the characters' surfacing emotions, and their exuberant and unrestrained dynamism give the movie a Warholian flavor. Rocco exalts the Pasolinian origin of the work by insisting on the bodies of the five 'layabouts,' their flesh and bones looking like a truth of their own. *Milano nera* appropriately ends in tragedy, the bleak landscape of the San Siro stadium, used also for *Una storia milanese*, reflecting the absurd death of the younger brother of one of the gang members.

Among the filmmakers who took upon themselves the task of enhancing the dirty corners, the seedy yards of Rome and the unclean bodies of their inhabitants the results were different. Even though Pasolini and Bolognini normally stand out for their compositional techniques, it seems that the 'minor' Heusch and Rondi are the ones conveying the most powerful political and ethical statement. The reason is probably the devotion that the former authors had for mannerist painting, welcomed in its anti-modern stance of classical ennoblement of humble subjects. Such aesthetic interface works as a hindrance in Pasolini and Bolognini's Roman pieces, with their neoplatonic tones of cold

humanism, where man untouched by a corrupting culture and marginalized by political conformism is the link between earth and something divine, and where the sense of proletarian community catholically evokes a eucharistic moment of grace. Unconcerned by the philosophical background behind the eponymous novel, Heusch and Rondi realize the lyrical potential of the proletarian milieu without putting forward a biopolitical thesis on the discontents of cultural homogenization. Although it does not have the pictorial qualities of the other works and is more about dealing with modernity than modernist in style, in *Una vita violenta* one can perceive the searing desperation of the suburban population almost made lyrical, turning this movie into an updated version of Visconti's anthropomorphic cinema. Regarding the use of nonprofessional actors, Visconti said that '[b]y violently abstracting from previous schemes, from any memory of method or of school, one should try to take the actor to finally speaking his own instinctual language.'[3] In the hands of Heusch and Rondi, nonprofessionals convey a tragic sense of truth when caught against their bleak environments. The proletarian way of life is not confined to what one does but represents a clear-cut ethical choice insofar as the stealing, the pointless strolling, and the pimping at least separate the good-for-nothing from the bourgeoisie and isolate and define him as he who does not belong to the capitalist mode of production (and is mocked by his peers after finding a job). The 'purity,' the uncontaminated approach toward enjoyment not yet polluted by regulated loops of work, production, and consumption, is also the necessary condition for highly moral deeds ultimately dooming the hero, as in *Una vita violenta* where the protagonist dies after saving a family from a flood.

Bolognini can also be considered the most innovative among the cineastes translating into film contemporary literary works. Bolognini had already dealt with the oedipal complex with the exquisite *La vena d'oro* (1955), but his inquisitive style, made up of explorative takes and volatile characters caught while pondering their fragility, is the perfect companion for Alberto Moravia's formation novel *Agostino*. During the 1950s and the 1960s eighteen of Moravia's novels and short stories served as material for movies: already treating his subjects with a cinematic eye, Moravia indulged in stories of decaying families, erotic obsessions, and laughable revolts. Damiano Damiani filmed *La noia* in 1963 and, thanks to a stellar cast enhanced by Bette Davis, convincingly conveyed the claustrophobia and angst of human relationships based exclusively on a logic of ownership and property. Damiani also directed *L'isola di Arturo* (1962), a tale of identity formation based on the novel by Elsa Morante, with the mythical landscape of Procida counterpointing the young protagonist's sexual illusions. Francesco Maselli had at his disposal proven stars like Shelley Winters and Claudia Cardinale, but his adaptation of *Gli indifferenti* (1964) turned out to be a stiff and vapid photostory, devoid of historical specificity and timid about portraying the nauseous feeling of moral

stagnation relentlessly described by Moravia. If *Gli indifferenti* remained 'a traditionally planned film, with hints of academic inertia,'[4] Bolognini's *Agostino (La perdita dell'innocenza)* (1965) is a successful mélange of modernist sensibility transfiguring Moravia's vitalism. Even though Bolognini softens some of the novel's rawest passages about the coming of age of a wealthy teenager who has no experience of sex and class differences, the film manages to transmit Agostino's helplessness in a highly sophisticated manner, rejecting didactic or moralistic tones. Bolognini masterfully intersperses illustrative moments from the novel with interrogative takes wandering through landscapes and peripheral areas, pointing to the process of growth that it is taking place inside the protagonist, a young boy who witnesses the rebirth of sexual desire in his widowed mother. While on his own during the mother's escapades, Agostino has to deal with the homoerotic tension originating from a group of pubescent boys and their adult 'guide,' an older man whose interest in the boys is anything but platonic. Because of his young age Agostino may seem out of place in this search for ethical principles applicable to the entire nation, but Moravia's heroes, regardless of their maturity, all bear the stigma of a predicament. Figuratively, they cannot hew their initials on the cortex of the social tree and sooner or later they will be absorbed by the indistinct, grey blob of the bourgeois mass. Agostino may be thirteen years old but he is already caught observing a world he cannot change, and his teenage fury and energy soon give way to inaction and resignation.

Pier Paolo Pasolini tried, with his *disperata vitalità*, to shake the apparently unmodifiable situation of stagnation, which seemed to have reached a point of no return by the early 1970s. Pasolini tampered with an illusory peasant identity, integrating his nostalgic vision of the past with a new humanism centered on a pure, metaphysical state of levity one finds only in people uncontaminated by Western values. For Pasolini, the creation of national foundational values could be deferred indefinitely. 'Proxy' values such as the flag, pride for military prowess, and generic patriotic instances were already off-limits for their Fascist aftertaste. When the quest for a virtuous patriotism seemed too risky and problematic to be undertaken, Pasolini wedged himself in that cultural vacuum. Thanks to his outstanding capacity for extrapolating the subtexts from civil conflicts Pasolini pinpointed before everybody else hidden trends of social adjustment: he could also be considered an early prophet of de-growth (Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen's *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process* was published in 1971). He only apparently challenged the necessity of organizations such as the Catholic Church or political parties and their right to 'educate' people: his only problem was that right should have been entrusted primarily to his personal authority. However, even though his ideas were often labeled as 'controversial,' Pasolini positioned himself in the cultural *temperie* of the time as a consistent developer of Italy's major ideological hindrance: a

Figures 53 to 56 With *Agostino (La perdita dell'innocenza)* (1965), Mauro Bolognini successfully adapted the novel by Alberto Moravia through abstract filming techniques, creating an example of 'impure' cinema where the filmic and the literary create a new artistic language.

paternalistic and ethical vision of society. Marga Cottino-Jones touched a sensitive spot when she wrote that, in spite of being known as a provocative bard who decimated modernity and its discontents, Pasolini was in fact capable of pleasing the two major Italian cultures,[5] which used him instrumentally with no qualms, especially after his tragic death. His divisive talent for polemics and controversy makes him a neuralgic and dangerous topic even today: Pasolini still has enemies everywhere, in the Right and also in the orthodox Left. Communist intellectual Edoardo Sanguineti, influential poet and university professor, and arch-adversary of Pasolini during his life, had to say many years after his death that the intellectual from Casarsa was first and foremost 'impossible to read,' 'a reactionary,' someone who 'observed with Marxist eyes, appeared to me as a typical representative of reactionary and romantic anti-capitalism.'[6] Pasolini was the innocent victim of many slanderous attacks, but the words he pronounced on the occasion of his first trial, when he was accused of sexual intercourse with minors are illuminating. When questioned by the public prosecutor, he candidly admitted that he was simply trying to recreate 'a literary situation' he read in a book by André Gide. His entire view of economic development and the presence of the media as evil for the proletarian youths he was so involved with is also a literary situation, like the Arcadia where his *ragazzi di vita* cavort around their one and only certified tutor, obviously Pasolini himself, and like the imagined communities of *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma* where violence and oppressiveness are not expunged but conveniently justified as lyrical necessities. In the immense bibliography about Pasolini, the elegiac and at the same time brutally honest portrait drawn by Alessandro Carrera seems one of the most insightful and fair:

> In the world of Pasolini, this eternal petty teacher of elementary school, the only important thing is that the poor remain quiet and the quiet remain poor . . . But in his ancient culture there was not a lot of room for democracy. Sure, Pasolini is anti-fascist, but he is also fundamentally pre-democratic. He comes from a world where the distinction between intellectual bourgeoisie and nonintellectual people (at best culturally 'spontaneous') is never questioned. On the contrary, Pasolini is actually the first to rebel against the fact that implementing democracy would mean to erase that distinction. In a stable and working democracy the intellectual tries to pursue the truth, to read that which is written, to connect facts and information, but that is his trade, it is neither a privilege nor a mission.[7]

Logos and the devastating power of speech are cornerstones in the philosophical system of the *Divine Comedy*: Pasolini reserved the same treatment for the emerging and, in his view, anthropologically reprehensible Italian language

spoken by the up-and-coming middle class. Pasolini labeled it a pastiche of consumerist needs, a code of uncertain references and dangerous interpretants. It is one of the reasons why the use or rather the absence of language is so peculiar in Pasolini's nonprofessional actors, a designating power that Giacomo Manzoli linked to an almost esoterical 'fourth dimension'[8] in the language of his mythical representatives of the *lumpenproletariat*. Playing along with the Dante comparison, for Pasolini television and public schools are like Ulysses, leading the masses astray with their 'small speech:' they should be silenced like Lucifer and thrown to the bottom of Hell. Pasolini weights very persuasively his origins and the scope of his role as an intellectual in the Gramscian quest for agency that characterizes his poetics. He is less persuasive and not able to cover its bluff when, instead of battering down the ostensible 'truths' circulated by the bourgeoisie to perpetuate privileges and inequalities, he romanticizes the de facto disenfranchised masses that seem to have no intellectual capacity to oppose the forms of perverse homogeneization he despised. In those instances, Pasolini comes across as a poseur; for example, when he was challenged on national television to 'say whatever he wanted, even profanities' by Enzo Biagi during a famous interview, he did not elaborate on the nature of the medium's evil influence nor carry out his bellicose intentions. When he relied on idealizing investitures – the Communist Party as *isola felice* in the cemeterial scenery of Italian politics; the Church still retaining its utility because charity and solidarity had to be considered among the intangibles of the Italian people; the poor as real intellectuals because of the ethnicity of their street laws – Pasolini was advocating a moral principle not differing from a transcendental ethos that precedes man. An example of his displeasure with the absence of a common ethos is testified by his prim analysis of the referendum that finally made divorce legal in Italy. The excerpt is from *Scritti corsari* and quoted in Crainz:

> My opinion is that the 59% of 'no' does not show a miraculous victory for progress, secularism, and democracy: not at all. Instead, it shows two things: 1) the values of the middle class . . . are the values of a consumerist, hedonistic ideology and its subsequent modernist tolerance of [the] American mold . . . there's no peasant and paleo-industrial Italy anymore, it's now collapsed, unraveled: in its place there is a vacuum that waits to be filled by a complete process of modernizing, falsely tolerant, Americanizing bourgeoisization . . . Voting 'no' was a victory . . . but it points to a 'mutation' of Italian culture breaking away from both traditional fascism and socialist progressivism.[9]

A revealing comparison is made by Crainz when he matches Pasolini's concerns with the remarks of Pietro Scoppola, a Catholic scholar who belittled the

battles for divorce and abortion simply as the need 'for the majority of Italian people not to be bothered with ethical problems,'[10] as though the 'ethical vacuum' could be filled by the only authorized organization, the Vatican, because the moral judgment of individuals had to be considered useless or dangerous if not properly notarized by qualified officials. For Pasolini and Scoppola the idea of good is not the sum of individual decisions but must be decided elsewhere, irrespective, when not against the idea that citizens had of it. If one wants a cinematic equivalent of that 'peasant Italy' that Pasolini was so nostalgic about but which was a highly controversial mooring from a purely historical standpoint, an example might be Vittorio Cottafavi's rendition of the novel *Maria Zef*, written by Paola Drigo, with the daily occurrences of violence and rape.

No other movie seemed to have captured Italy's Zeitgeist better than *La dolce vita*, which came out in 1960 but whose account of social and economic transformation was so apocalyptically prophetic that it seems capable of promulgating judgments on the condition of man even today. It cannot be considered a canonically postmodern movie because of the lack of interlacing worlds in the narrative or fragmented characters split into separate entities. However, when confronted with notions such as reason and responsibility, *La dolce vita* justifies an attribution to a postmodern sensibility thanks to its depiction of the ethical decenterization of the subject. The movie does not postulate a relative truth, rather it puts on display a number of potential centers to do away with them equally, fluctuating between modernism and postmodernism through the ethical exploration that the protagonist embarks on during the journey, as the fragmented, fragile, transient nature of identity poses problems for moral responsibility that its protagonist Marcello cannot cope with. Structurally, it has been remarked how its erratic style is the opposite of the linearity of the classic Hollywood plot, and its progression achieved with the use of macro-sequences can be compared to movies like Akira Kurosawa's *The hidden fortress* (1958). As Mary P. Wood writes, 'Marcello in *La dolce vita* is essentially an observer, rather than an initiator, of action, reinforced by the picaresque character of Fellini's narrative construction. Each scenographic space through which the protagonist wanders provokes a new reflection on the grotesque re-ordering of human experience.'[11] The movie ends with one of Fellini's signature 'circus scenes,' the 'transformation' into a chicken of a provincial girl who came to Rome looking to make her fortune, as in Tod Browning's *Freaks* (and Sondra Lee is the actress whose face and gestuality 'slips' toward the turned-into-chicken Olga Baclanova). It is a loss of foundations where disillusion destroys sources of order and meaning without replacing them with something new. For Marcello, a brief moment of intuition can occur only by proxy via the totalizing vision of Sylvia, the American actress who cannot distinguish human culture from animal instinct and puts a hungry kitten and the Fontana di Trevi

on the same plane. If, as Zygmunt Bauman said, modernity is postmodernity refusing to accept its own truth of chaos, disintegration, arbitrariness, and contingency, *La dolce vita* is a hymn to disenchantment, a phenomenological exploration of a general loss of references, allegorized by the aimless wandering of the protagonist, whose *flânerie* is not a nonchalant and yet productive act of experience but rather a blind and desperate journey into habitations devoid of any type of faith and utopian vision:

> The postmodern mind does not expect any more to find the all-embracing, total and ultimate formula of life without ambiguity, risk, danger and error, and is deeply suspicious of any voice that promises otherwise . . . The postmodern mind is reconciled to the idea that the messiness of the human predicament is here to stay.[12]

Federico Fellini is probably the only Italian filmmaker traversing the tripartite periodization articulated by Fredric Jameson in his 'The existence of Italy,' part of the volume *Signatures of the visible*. The scholar has also argued in *Geopolitical Aesthetics* that *La dolce vita* might be regarded as a work conjoining modernism and postmodernism by virtue of the contradictory and fragmented identities inhabiting its polymorphous and schizophrenic pseudo-subjects, especially when confronted with the question of adapting to a *société du spectacle*. Each character is engaged in a struggle with him/herself and their images: Marcello's flirting with low culture and mediocrity, Steiner's retreating into a falsely comforting apartment that will become a grave, and his wife's amused befuddlement when asking photographers whether they took her for an actress when she is mobbed by them right before learning that her entire family is tragically dead. Fellini dealt with the disintegration of the subject after the first part of his career, comprising *Le notti di Cabiria*, *La strada* and *Il bidone*, or the triad of 'luminous phenomenological explorations.'[13] The epiphanic potential – of religion, of a 'pure' encounter, like the ones with the sea monster and the girl angel played by Valeria Ciangottini at the end of *La dolce vita* – is a corrupted cliché: determining one's path ceases to be an option and the protagonist, as Antonio Costa wrote, 'literally lets himself go,'[14] rejoining his brothers/losers in a semi-conscious movement dictated by momentum. In the legendary scene where Cabiria follows the procession to the Divino Amore and implores the Virgin to provide change – conveying the image of a country where one's existence is delegated to religious institutions – the filmmaker perfects his oft-expressed concern with individuality, especially in contrast to what he sees as the collectivity of conventional existence (*Amarcord* comes to mind). The procession and imploration scene becomes immensely powerful if we accept Frank Burke's interpretation of Fellini's early stage as a trajectory aimed at differentiation and self-individuation:

> As possibility replaces mere givenness, the nature of illusion changes. The fantasies of Fellini's early characters are all false attempts to deny a given reality, because they are derived from that reality (for instance, Wanda's 'White Sheik'). Because this kind of illusion is not self-created, it does not answer to the needs of the characters who embrace it: it merely leads to loss of identity. In contrast, the illusions Cabiria will come to embrace always correlate precisely with what she needs in order to grow.[15]

'Self acceptance' – Fellini said – 'can occur only when you've grasped one fundamental fact of life: that the only thing which exists is yourself, your true individual self in depth, which wants to grow spontaneously, but which is fettered by inoperative lies, myths and fantasies proposing an unattainable morality or sanctity or perfection . . . every human being has [her] own irrevocable truth, which is authentic and precious and unique.'[16] Thanks to the main character, whose social status could point to an incestuous relationship with the Neorealist tradition, but also for the syncopated narrative rhythm and phenomenological articulation of the encounters, *Le notti di Cabiria* is a moral tale teaching us to welcome life with poetic abandon. The stories of the Roman prostitute, of the old swindler Augusto from *Il bidone*, and of Gelsomina in *La strada* all point to that path of self-individuation that Marcello seem to embrace but ultimately rejects. Douglas Crimp writes, in a passage that suits Fellini's trajectory very well: 'The fiction of the creating subject gives way to the frank confiscation, quotation, excerptation, accumulation and repetition of already existing images. Notions of originality, authenticity and presence . . . are undermined.'[17] From this standpoint, *La dolce vita* may not look like a radical change from *Le notti di Cabiria*: there is a main character, not intermittent but stable throughout the entire picture, who is also a center of consciousness and a narrative device to move the story forward in a more or less conventional way. However the ontological status of the protagonist who loses his grip on events and cannot find a reason for the labyrinthine intricacies of his own life is put into question. Marcello's will slips from his grasp just like bodies disappear with no consequence in *L'avventura* or love stories end for no apparent reason in Pietrangeli's *La visita*. The state of indeterminacy of the subject is quickly adopted internationally. For instance, let's take Marlen Khutsiev's *July Rain* (1966), the plotless story of a young, unmarried couple, their perishing love, their intellectual friends in the background of Moscow and the Soviet Union of the mid-1960s. In *La visita*, the hopes and feelings are so feeble and frail that they do not last the trial of a few sleepless hours or, in *July Rain*, a jammed conversation on the phone.

Pasolini employed the journey as an epistemological enterprise, in space and in time, with *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1966). A marvelous specimen of *cinema di poesia* where documentary inserts (the funeral of PCI secretary Palmiro

Togliatti) coexist with lyrical flights and religious parables, the movie shows Nino (Ninetto Davoli) and his father (Totò), joined by a Marxist crow, wandering the outskirts of Rome, first meeting some of Ninetto's girlfriends, then interacting with youths at a decrepit bar, then transformed into two friars and ordered by St. Francis to convert the hawks and the sparrows, and then, back from their excursion in time, harassing a poor woman with no money to pay rent, helping a group of Felliniesque characters on the road with their show, spending time with a prostitute named Luna, and finally eating the crow. Pasolini declared that *Uccellacci e uccellini* was a *hapax* in his career, with its fable-like form and a recognizable actor like Totò placed in a Neorealistic milieux. Pasolini also mentioned, as a unifying motif, the lightness of the air 'Der hölle rache' from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, which probably struck Pasolini for its educational subtext: as Francesco Attardi writes, in *Die Zauberflöte* 'also the popular, educational element comes into play – an element which, half in jest, half in earnest, should provide ethical and existential messages.'[18] *Uccellacci e uccellini* exemplifies the trajectory of the Cold War subject as postulated by Hannah Arendt: embarked on a journey with no destination, excluded from all traditions, his energy scattered throughout a bunch of delusions but compulsively 'programmed' to take on new challenging paths. The movie seamlessly glides from a postmodern present (the youths clumsily dancing outside a tumbledown 'Las Vegas' bar in the outskirts of Rome) to an austere past (Totò and Ninetto's medieval quest of evangelization) to a messianic future (the street signals evoking the humble figures of street cleaners and tinsmiths, in the hope of a recognition of the quasi-divine greatness of the 'simple man'). Also, the fictitious name Totò is given in the movie, 'Ciccillo,' is probably a reference to a skit Totò used to perform in his stage career, immortalized in Giuseppe Amato's *Yvonne La Nuit* (1949). In Totò, Pasolini saw a representative of that 'modernity of the people' as he writes in the poem *Il canto popolare*, where modern equals authentic, of the people, also intended as the opportunism of the people, their cynicism, the capacity of adjusting to adversity, and the spontaneous ability to perform.

Flânerie as a metaphor of disorientation and uncertainty, indifference toward life's structured 'opportunities,' and the generic vacuity of one's encounters is central in Dino Risi's *Il sorpasso* and Tinto Brass' *Chi lavora è perduto – In capo al mondo*. Structured like a road movie, *Il sorpasso* is the hypostatization of an empty desire that revolves around itself and is not reconciled. The anecdotic confirmation that Italian comedies also had the potential of being cinema of epiphanic moments comes, of all people, from Wim Wenders, who named the protagonists of *In Lauf der Zeit* (1976) after the Roberto and Bruno of *Il sorpasso*. In Wenders' cinema, the Rossellinian lesson of solid time irrupting into the frame could go hand in hand with Risi's superb construction of characters, naked masks experiencing existential earthquakes

at every turn of of the road. *Il sorpasso* is the story of two 'maladjusted' men – Bruno, a mature man with a pyrotechnical personality and nothing to show for the success he always boasts, and Roberto, the timorous law student with no initiative – who run into each other by chance and spend the mid-August day of *ferragosto* driving up Italy's west coast. *Il sorpasso* is also a narrative about frustration: Bruno seems to dispose of female conquests with the same rapidity he has when conjuring up improbable activities and ideas but tries to return to his family in a pathetic, desperate assault; Roberto lets the values and desires of his family live vicariously through him, respecting a timetable that someone else has decided for him, and when he seems to be ready to push away those external projects, he dies. Risi goes beyond the comedy of 'types' and creates two characters mirroring collective tendencies and concerns, both without answers and in desperate need of direction. Bruno the villain and his vision of the 'new Italy' enjoy a dubious victory with Roberto's tragic sacrifice, but Roberto himself is far from being a positive character with his annoying prudence and recurring fears. At the end of their allegorical journey, the idea of citizenry emerging from *Il sorpasso* is that of incompatibility and hostility. Maurizio Grande noted that in Mario Monicelli's archetypal comedy *I soliti ignoti* (1958) the heist cannot be carried out because every gang member has a social obligation toward a 'real' family or a surrogate and cannot break the symbolic order[19]: *Il sorpasso* is a macabre hypothesis regarding the tension between traditional familistic values and a disarticulated subject pushing himself to the margins. The atmosphere of impending doom throughout the movie, Bruno's conformist mentality and his satisfaction of immediate needs mirror the failures and broken expectations of Italy as a nation: the cynicism and repressed anger will explode a few years later during the 'years of lead,' chronicled by the violence of the *poliziotteschi*.

Chi lavora è perduto (censorship did not like the previous title, *In capo al mondo*) follows the unemployed Bonifacio, like Marcello in *La dolce vita*, in his bizarre pilgrimage around Venice, undecided about accepting a job as a technical designer but mentally equating his future tasks with those of a pigeon-feeder in Piazza San Marco. Bonifacio's movement signifies confusion and decenterization, a physical but also mental wandering affecting perception of present and past events. Unlike other realist pictures concerned with identitarian claims, where the distance run by the wanderer is a symbolic appropriation that, as Lúcia Nagib noticed, gains the 'upper hand' over diegesis, here it is not 'related to the characters' recognizing, experiencing, demarcating and taking possession of a territory, and, in so doing, defining a people and its culture.'[20] It is the opposite: the characters' running in circles exemplifies the vain search for a point of arrival justifying the ideals that seemed so evident in the past and now have faded under the spineless groveling of new conformists. One may borrow Deleuze's terminology and pinpoint the disconnection

between perception and action, resulting in intervals where the characters' failure to reassess their situation 'culminates' in prolonged hesitations, unsuccessful inquiries, and instinctual explosions. In *Chi lavora è perduto* – the new title can be read as a 'blasphemous' attack againts the Italian constitution, whose first article reads that Italy is a republic founded on work – after the alienating *esame psicotecnico*, already highlighted as a deliberate practice of reification in Olmi's *Il posto*, Bonifacio wanders through Venice brooding over past, present, and future events in a fragmented and often unintelligible Italian–Venetian pastiche. His entire being is embraced when reminiscing about his repressive education, love stories that ended for reasons that none of the partners seemed capable of explaining, historical values that are still haunting the present day – 'Fascist from the very beginning' reads a gravestone while he is walking through a cemetery – and friendships with disenchanted losers who have reacted with inaction or sheer madness to the contemporary world. A frontal, virulent attack against moral customs and institutions, *Chi lavora è perduto – In capo al mondo* is, like other works Brass made at the beginning of his career[21] also a destructured and libertarian hymn against the suffocating conformism of bourgeois life carried out in loose and episodic fashion, with memories triggering flashbacks, which in turn string threads of additional soliloquies and fantasies in a Deleuzian protocol of *errance* and *voyance*. As writer Giuseppe Marotta recalls in his *Di riffe o di raffe*, the censorship commission indicted the movie as a subversive, apocalyptic work 'offending social, moral and sexual mores and destroying all spiritual values.' Although Brass might not be remembered as a sophisticated auteur, his poignant insistence on freedom evokes a paradigm of cultural stasis that he tries to subvert with the technique of Rossellini, emphasizing the spirit of the epoch and using exuberant characters in a way that is reminiscent of Godard's portrait of young people as confronting and disrupting a fossilized order of things.

Neorealism was the template to liberate the image and unhinge time, and could also be injected with irony: some communities' reaction toward an unchangeable status quo was a defiant eternalization of their conditions. A film that forces a coexistence of durations through self-contained synchronicities while comedically engaging the topoi of the 'Southern question' is Lina Wertmüller's *I basilischi* (1963). *I basilischi*, Wertmüller's most accomplished work, is her *opera prima*. The movie starts with a big family in a silent lunch scene, characterized by gestures that the family in question must have made thousands of times. While pauses and trivial events drive the narrative, a voiceover comes to our rescue – the purpose of this outstanding scene is not to introduce stars or initiate dramatic action, but to frame the movie with a peculiar treatment of time: 'It's that idle, drowsy moment [*la controra*] of a summer day, but let's take any day whatever, maybe of last year, maybe of next year, 'cause it's all the same.' As spectators we follow two of the local *vitelloni*

Figures 57 to 60 Lina Wertmüller's *I basilischi* (1963) is a 'Rossellinian comedy' using devices such as contrasting durations and peripheral takes to immerse the viewer in the upside-down world of Southern Italy: an old lady hanging from a balcony in the act of committing suicide asks a neighbor to stop screaming (Fig. 57); a local 'youth' (Sergio Ferranino) consuming American music (Fig. 58); the 'human jukebox' – a young child interpreting Chubby Checker's *Let's twist again* for small change (Fig. 59); the two main protagonists, Francesco and Antonio (Stefano Satta Flores, left, and Antonio Petruzzi), framed by gigantic corn husks (Fig. 60).

– *I basilischi* is often compared to Fellini's film – only to remain caught in digressions of their families, of other youths, of various female types in the small town, strands that apparently become the main narrative only to die a few scenes later and be casually picked up again only to die one more time. Wertmüller's film is a sardonic commentary on the apocalypsis of immigration as treated by directors like Luchino Visconti: here one of the useless and always procrastinating youths actually manages to go to Rome, but he hastily makes it back because it is just too hard to prove yourself in a competitive environment when you can comfortably return to a life of complete inaction. The tedious, 'Bergsonian' ennui of a Southern small town and its any-time-whatevers seem to explode under the Rossellinian treatment of duration: the locals are caught while dragging their feet in aimless wanderings, debating whether it would be useless to organize parties, since no one would come, delaying university exams that carry no promise of a better future anyway. The setting seems

to bear the Neorealist promise of marginalization and desperation, but the expectations are dramatically countered by a sarcastic celebration of the status quo: the use of Neorealist techniques of time manipulation redeems a picture that, without the peripheral takes and the emphasis on irreconcilable durations would have looked like a picturesque sketch.

Another movie depicting communities of mostly unproductive members through contrasting temporalities was Vittorio Caprioli's *Leoni al sole* (1961). *Leoni al sole* looks at first like a traditional comedy with witty dialogues, slapstick action, and parodic moments: it is a work made up of colliding durations, such as the expectations of the young, the coming of age of the old, the apparent 'solidity' of time in a seaside resort where nothing seems to happen and nothing gets accomplished. It takes place in Positano and depicts a group of middle-aged men desperately trying to avoid work, family, and other responsibilities, always flirting with tourists and locals, peeking at topless sunbathers, scientifically channeling their lives into a frozen state of idleness. A humorous moment of 'revelation' occurs when some of the 'lions' learn that the Milanese tourist, played by comedy ace Franca Valeri, is a writer paid to sleep in hotels and to assess the quality of restaurants. Caprioli's filmmaking of *leggerezza* is characterized by an apparent frivolity that hints at deeper layers of human behavior: his anticlimactic movies are usually paced quickly, without twists or turns monopolizing the plot, with the camera moving from episode to episode, from character to character revealing a well-defined milieu. His apparent levity is tempered by an extraordinary capacity to convincingly delineate friendships and amorous relationships with minimal dialogue and camera movement. The mastery with which he transforms light situations into austere reflections on personal choices, only to recapture the comedy of life immediately after can make one think of Monicelli's best moments or, outside Italy, of Pedro Almodóvar and Eric Rohmer. The only problem of *Leoni al sole* is when too much space is given to the sturdy, handsome Mimì played by Philippe Leroy, an actor who, as shown in Lattuada's *La mandragola* (1965) could singlehandedly destroy a movie with his wooden, uninspiring palette of expressions. Caprioli has an eccentric trajectory – he worked with De Sica for the screen but was a theater actor first and foremost – and his refreshing approach to the making of comedies is also evident in *Parigi o cara* (1962). In this movie, Delia is a prostitute, played again by Franca Valeri – Caprioli's wife and co-star in their theater company – who goes from Rome to Paris and back after she falls for a Neapolitan *pizzaiolo*, played by Caprioli, who wants to return to Italy. Hilarious moments perfectly constructed with the principles of screwball comedy are interwoven with sudden pauses and social commentary, as when Delia – who also does microfinancing on the side – lists her favorite places in Rome and the camera pans across soulless apartment complexes and aseptic tourist resorts.

Figures 61 and 62 *Joie de vivre* versus ennui in Positano: at the top (Fig. 61), Caprioli uses the 'underage bait' to make an old jeweller reflect on death and decay in order to secure a discount for Valeri; at the bottom (Fig. 62), the 'coming of age' of 50-year-old Scisciò (Francesco Morante), who goes to Cremona to work.

While Francesco Maselli had a less successful attempt at depicting a similar community with *I delfini* (1960), Marco Ferreri's *Los chicos* (1959) deals convincingly with struggles of self-definition. *I delfini* is an ambitious social drama in which Maselli looks moralistically at the hypocrisy of a provincial town and constructs cold, aloof characters involved in machinations concerning amorous relations and money. Ferreri's film on the other hand, even though it was made during his Spanish period, goes beyond the immediate, unflattering portrayal of Franco's Spain to describe the lives of a group of young kids. Their fragility, their moments of recognition, the futility of their aspirations are shown in the interactions with the people and the streets of Madrid. Starting from the earliest phase of his career, Ferreri's works expose the normalcy of relationships as a fragile mask that often reveals overt bestiality. His first picture was *El pisito* (1959), where the real estate squeeze in Madrid is an excuse for a gallery of characters alternating between monstrous and pathetic. The plot is driven by Petrita (Mary Carrillo), a young woman engaged to the indecisive Rodolfo (José Luis López Vázquez), who ultimately bullies her weak fiancé into marry-

ing eighty-year-old Doña Martina (Concha López Silva) in order to inherit the latter's apartment after she dies.

The dialectical relationship between society and individual takes a virulent turn toward the end of the decade. An alarming fetishization of weapons points to a number of repressed issues. In two extremely different works, *Dillinger è morto* (1969) by Ferreri and *Fuoco!* (1969) by Gian Vittorio Baldi, we observe the same tragic death of the protagonists' wives, shot while a pillow is held on their faces. The striking similarities indicate a profound crisis of man's existential cocoon. If Ferreri grotesquely phenomenologizes the post-ideological boredom through Michel Piccoli's alienated disconnectedness and then negates any escapist option with the illusory, sardonic appearance of the vessel taking the killer to the southern seas, Baldi takes Rossellini's anti-narrative lesson to the extreme, following an unemployed man who first kills his mother-in-law, then riddles the Virgin's statue with bullets during a procession, barricades himself in his crumbling apartment, kills his wife, hands his little daughter to the *carabinieri*, and finally turns himself in. While *Dillinger è morto* also exemplifies quite literally the postmodern confusion about the colliding worlds we are living in – Michel Piccoli tries to hug the characters of an amateur vacation video he projects on his wall, deliriously attempting to jump into the images – *Fuoco!* investigates the naturalness of violence, its spontaneous emergence as yet another daily chore. An 'exercise in style on cinematographic time and on dead times of existence in modern civilization,'[22] *Dillinger è morto* – a film made up of pauses, interruptions, dead zones, 'an endless introduction to who knows what'[23] – interrogates the post-human condition of man, 'a state in which there is a continuous collapsing of man and machine,'[24] and where human actions cannot be differentiated from the wanton, 'unjustified' malfunction of objects that seem to possess a life of their own. The film opens with the technical evaluation of anti-gas gear: hooked to a gas mask, from inside a contaminated chamber, a man signals that everything is fine. We as viewers get a close-up of the mask, a fetish like many others in *Dillinger è morto*, symbolizing the 'scientific' suppression of the instinctual dimension of man, culminating in the disappearance of spaces where communication can be attained and real information exchanged. Then, one of the colleagues of Michel Piccoli, the protagonist, abruptly pulls out a stack of papers where he elaborated his own theory of alienation and cultural constructedness – didascalic introduction that Ferreri felt necessary as a conceptual frame of the movie. After they move to the office, Piccoli seems more and more impatient to leave as he listens, then pulls out a watch to exemplify his need to leave. At that point, the colleague exchanges the time Piccoli does not have anymore with three small boxes containing home movies: in the era of compressed time and space and lightning-fast circulation of 'cultural' artifacts, not even the subconscious is free to function as a reservoir of aspirations and dreams. *Dillinger è morto* depicts an insurmountable

state of immanent and abstract reification, sceptical about moral imperatives and unifying motifs, crowning a decade of anti-normative ethics and distrust in man. Shot with a rigorous field-recording technique, *Fuoco!* recounts the agonizing conflict between a man without a voice – who symbolically speaks only once, shouting a few incomprehensible words – and a state/community represented by the *carabinieri* officer, filling the empty locale with his incessant singsong plea to the man and representing the only interface with the outside world. The *carabiniere* demonstrates extensive knowledge of Mario's situation, asks questions about his entire family, makes empty promises, eternalizes time – 'ti troviamo un lavoro e tutto va come prima (we'll find you a job and everything will be just like it used to be)' – taking on himself the duty of searing the wound and preserving the community. Just like *Dillinger è morto*, with its surreal ending about an impossible return to a primitive, natural, and pristine condition, *Fuoco!* is both about the archaic and the modern world. Baldi's early cinema – *Luciano*, a pre-economic portrait of Roman *borgate*, or the Zavattinian *La casa delle vedove* (both from 1960), an existential inquiry with sequences resembling the famous maid scene in *Umberto D.* – is about 'things in a state of decomposition' and 'a world that has ended'[25] but still unable to renegotiate a way into an acceptable compromise that can somehow remove the causes of desperation. Far from being only a zealous, overdone application of Neorealist tenets, *Fuoco!* shows an ominous incarnation of an ethical stance with the exhausted and machine-like killer, whose perpetrated massacre is a supreme instance of a naked truth, the ultimate affirmation of freedom. Such an undercurrent of anxiety pervades also directors like Bertolucci and Brass, who directly engaged the cultural provocations and the slogans originating from the political turmoil and youth movement of 1968.

One of the most peculiar figures among independent filmmakers was Augusto Tretti, highly praised by Fellini but considered a village fool even more extreme than Zavattini and thus carefully avoided by producers. His works are virulent attacks against any type of authority, ridiculing the jargon, costumes and gestures of power. In spite of very limited budgets, Tretti was successful in conveying the fraud and misery ingrained in man's self-aggrandizing narratives: he dismantles the aura of entrepreneurs and military officers with copious use of caricature-type actors (all nonprofessional, like his family cook, Maria Boto, who in *La legge della tromba* plays multiple roles) and raw sound effects. *La legge della tromba* (1962), a surreal tale of marginalization that follows a group of poor men 'freelancing' first at robbery and then at manual labor with disastrous results, was made in 1962 and uses the trumpet – manufactured by a corporation and imposed on the population – as a transparent metaphor for pomp and not so dissimulated abuse.

After the corrosive satire *Il potere* (1971) and before the short *Mediatori e carrozze* (1985), Tretti was entrusted by the municipality of Milan with the

Figures 63 to 64 For the Anarchist–Marxist Tretti, an alliance of all disenfranchised classes (peasants and convicts, left, Fig. 63) is one conceivable option in order not to succumb to the capital–army alliance and the 'law of the trumpet' and its rituals of subjugation (right, Fig. 64).

task of shooting a film against teenage alcoholism. The result was the stunning *Alcool* (1980), where the filmmaker not only capably fulfills his didactic purpose but also inserts his signature power critique, showing the use of alcohol as a medium of social control and mocking the entertainment industry and its fake moral concerns.

Notes

1. Gian Piero Brunetta, *Il cinema neorealista italiano: Storia economica, politica e culturale* (Bari: Laterza, 2009), 305.
2. Marsha Kinder, 'The Subversive Potential of the Pseudo-Iterative,' in Brian Henderson and Ann Martin with Lee Amazonas (ed.), *Film Quarterly: Forty Years – A Selection* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 126–50.
3. Luchino Visconti, 'Cinema antropomorfico,' in *Cinema*, N. 173–4, September–October 1943.
4. Stefania Parigi, *Francesco Maselli* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1992), 46.
5. Carlo Celli and Marga Cottino-Jones, *A New Guide to Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 89.
6. Edoardo Sanguineti, 'Pasolini? Un reazionario illeggibile,' *Il Messaggero*, September 26, 1995, 17. Sanguineti also adds that 'the rhetoric of his poetry can hardly be tolerated, and his novels are frankly unreadable.'
7. Alessandro Carrera, 'Pro e contro Pasolini: Per farla finita con l''umile Italia,' *Poesia*, Anno XIII, December 2000, N. 145, 73–6.
8. Giacomo Manzoli, *Voce e silenzio nel cinema di Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Bologna: Pendragon, 2001), 9. The author explains the centrality of oral communication in Pasolini's system by surrendering its status to a pre-historical past that in Pasolini becomes almost a-historical: 'Vocality is a ghost coming from a different moment of human civilization.'
9. Guido Crainz, *Il paese mancato: Dal miracolo economico agli anni ottanta* (Rome: Donzelli, 2003), 504–5.
10. Ibid. 505.

11. Mary P. Wood, *Italian Cinema* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 195.
12. Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 245.
13. Alessia Ricciardi, 'The spleen of Rome: Mourning modernism in Fellini's *La dolce vita*,' *Modernism/Modernity* 7.2 (2000), 202.
14. Antonio Costa, *Federico Fellini: La dolce vita* (Turin: Lindau, 2010), 145.
15. Frank Burke, *Fellini's Films: From Postwar to Postmodern* (New York: Macmillan, 1996), 79.
16. Quoted in Hollis Alpert, *Fellini: A Life* (New York: Atheneum, 1986), 178.
17. Douglas Crimp, 'The photographic activity of postmodernism,' in Robert Docherty (ed.), *Postmodernism: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 156.
18. Francesco Attardi, *Viaggio intorno al Flauto Magico* (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2006), 207.
19. Maurizio Grande, *La commedia all'italiana* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2003), 71.
20. Lúcia Nagib, *World Cinema and the Ethics of Realism* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 12.
21. Together with the Taviani brothers, Brass was an assistant director for Joris Ivens for his documentary *L'Italia non è un paese povero*, made in 1959 and commissioned by ENI.
22. Maurizio Grande, 'La scrittura célibe,' in Stefania Parigi (ed.), *Marco Ferreri: Il cinema e i film* (Venice: Marsilio, 1995), 8.
23. Emiliano Morreale, *Cinema d'autore degli anni Sessanta* (Milan: Il Castoro, 2011), 159.
24. Jennifer Attaway, 'Cyborg bodies and digitized desires: Posthumanity and Phillip K. Dick,' in *Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture* [online], Vol. 4, Issue 3, 2004. http://reconstruction.eserver.org/043/attaway.htm (accessed April 20, 2012).
25. From an interview with Gian Vittorio Baldi in Roberto Chiesi (ed.), *Fuoco! Il cinema di Gian Vittorio Baldi* (Bologna: Edizioni Cineteca di Bologna, 2009), 129.

6. REIMAGINING NATIONAL IDENTITY

Economic and Social: The Dissolution of Traditional Ties and the Reconstitution of Society

Neorealism tried to empty the cinematic space of adoring crowds and fake symbols ransacked from a fictitious Roman and imperial past and remake it into a geographic space with real inhabitants (and the infamous 'dumps' that, Fellini once said, had become the commonplace of generic Neorealist cinema). Neorealism was also nation-building 'by subtraction' (and, as Noa Steimatsky writes, it was 'restorative at that,' setting aside ideological differences and promoting a meeting ground of appeasement) in the sense that the problematization of the raw facts, no matter how much misery and poverty were involved, still emphasized the demand for love and reconciliation. Blows were dealt, but they were not taken as an excuse for hatred and division. Instead, the new cinema of the 1960s was less interested in processes of nation-building. Rather, many of the seminal works were prescriptive and nation-*constructing*, elaborating mirror images of an Italian society that was celebrating its disengagement from and inadequacy for a violent modernization (Antonioni) or even venturing into a nightmarish, post-human territory (Ferreri). Neorealism was also about forging a nation: post-Neorealist film is already about individuals and micro-communities after the failure of such an enterprise. In many instances, the goal of creating new types of community is actively pursued but with no success. Relational processes are doomed to fail and testify to the disintegration of a shared identity, with no recognizable sense of belonging.

Very few are the positive prospects of Italian society as an economic and social system wherein people can harness their talents and expect to find their place in the world. As soon as the dynamic processes of technological modernization and flexible accumulation endanger the fragile certainties of rural Italy, filmmakers are presented with a range of choices. Some investigate the consequences on workers and individuals; others mock the people's unpreparedness and naïveté. An example is the omnibus divertissement *I complessi* (1965). Especially famous is the last episode, starring an energetic Alberto Sordi as *Il dentone*, an overly ambitious and super-prepared candidate for news announcer on national television, only with huge, monstrous teeth that prove not to be a hindrance to his irresistible rise. When approached by the unctuous priest of the interviewing commission, Sordi resolutely declares that he cannot see any problems with his own external appearance – save for a minor contour at the end of his nose, 'but visible only in profile' – and that he has everything straightened out for his future, with cinema and Hollywood following his triumphant entry into television. Even a trifle like *Il dentone*, thanks to the character's all-encompassing culture, steady delivery, unbreakable optimism and nonchalant attitude about his teeth, retains an allegorical message à la Dr. Jekyll. The end scene shows our *dentone* cheerfully reading positive news about Italy, with subsequent shots of wave antennas and the country's most important monuments.

One of the most traumatic events in the process of cultural change taking place between the mid-1950s and the end of the economic boom, circa 1962, was the desacralization of the family and, extensively, of the bourgeoisie as a class and as a provider of stable values for the nation. The tendency whereby families become nuclear and homes turn into private spaces of separation left individuals with a higher degree of responsibility and destabilizing pressure. As Stephen Gundle writes, when 'the old networks of mutual support and collective living slipped away, families closed in on themselves, and individuals became isolated.'[1] Irrespective of geographic and economic differences, familial relations were generally perceived as oppressive, mounting an anachronistic resistance to all the forms of repressed freedoms that were eroding the symbolic boundaries of family as an institution. Neorealism was kind to family as an institution taking it for granted and not showing its cracks, which are exposed as soon as the early 1950s with *I vitelloni* and *Bellissima* (1951), two choral movies dealing with members of communities whose lives are filled with frustrations. Both pictures deal with children, be they real or men-children. While Visconti's film is an exercise in reflexivity, using the movie industry as a metaphor for one's problematic self-expression, Fellini's *I vitelloni* tests the boundaries of Neorealist representation in terms of its capacity to sustain an influx of grotesque overtones and pathetically existential themes like delayed adulthood and puerile rebelliousness. The plot provides no closure and

focuses on characters immersed in provincial city streets where, contrary to Schopenhauer's description, the entire duration of the week is not for work but for boredom. Basking in the draining drowsiness of an Italian small town, the protagonists of *I vitelloni* reinforced – or created altogether – the myth of a provincial Italy where men procrastinate their graduation into the adult world as long as they can. Their life revolves around rituals whose goal is simply to postpone the encounter with themselves, trying to stretch their idleness beyond chronologic time, 'when the night is already over,' as the narrator says while Monaldo, the more level-headed of the bunch, runs into a young kid who starts his shift at the railway station when it is still dark.

Female chorality is depicted with different overtones. The mob of women – always in a position of subalternity, whether coming from the proletarian ranks or not enjoying financial independence – is a constant in postwar Italian cinema, signifying the exclusion from power. Examples range from Luigi Zampa's *L'onorevole Angelina* (1947) to Giuseppe De Santis' *Roma ore 11*, where the crumbling ladder under which some typists looking for work find death is the realized metaphor of shattered aspirations and negated social advancement. Zampa and Visconti liked to tell choral stories whose protagonists are then caught struggling in the negotiation of their new roles and ambitions with their existing families: it is a theme they have in common with Pietro Germi. Often considered as a typical representative first of Neorealism's heroic years for his *Il cammino della speranza* (1950) and then of regional comedies for *Divorzio all'italiana* (1961) and *Sedotta e abbandonata* (1964), Germi was also held as a maverick type of director for his admiration of American cinema and his ability to escape the rigid conventions of genres or *filoni*, sometimes instituting new typologies from scratch, as with the noir *Un maledetto imbroglio* (1959) and the individualistic parables of *L'uomo di paglia* (1958) and *Il ferroviere* (1955). *L'uomo di paglia* is the story of a petit-bourgeois family, especially the father, who falls in love with a young typist who commits suicide when feeling used by the man, who in turn will rejoin the wife after their family life has been destroyed. Germi privileged scripts centered on exploration of individuals, showing the force of Eros dismantling lives and families and apparently adopting a moralistic tone – he often chose for himself the same dubber for the voice of James Stewart – but in fact exposing the failures one incurs for respecting conventions and faking authenticity. The ending shows the reunited family, a solution that was criticized for its apparently conciliatory tone, but it symbolically reconnects with the hollow men filled with straw, from the T. S. Eliot poem that gives the name to the movie. The poem is explicitly quoted in the scene where the characters' heads are lined up and juxtaposed against a scarecrow to denounce the spiritual ineptness of all the protagonists and make the audience think about the only true and courageous winner. She is the young typist Rita, barely 'legal' in the movie and

dynamically played by Franca Bettoja, who kills herself not for the impossible aspiration to a 'normal' marriage after the affair with Andrea, but because of her coherence in condemning Andrea's slothful demeanor when confronted about his feelings. Germi enjoys a dubious fame as a preacher, a proposer of values that were hopelessly out of fashion, architect of mellifluous endings that apparently dissolve all the discoursive destruction introduced earlier on. A possible interpretation of such superimposition of robust bourgeois values lies in the fact that his works appear conventionally melodramatic on the surface but are actually disruptive in the way they cannot channel convincingly any superordinate principle. Germi cast himself in *Il ferroviere* and *L'uomo di paglia* as a last man standing for a previous order, but at the end he can only salvage a pragmatic model of social interaction based on necessity and survival, with emotional chaos percolating through each scene. Germi's 'regional' works are also tragedies disguised as comedies, depicting 'tribal clan rules, as rigid as they are anachronistic.'[2] *Divorzio all'italiana* shows the same complexity in its disenchanted and cynical assessment of the ideological perimeter inside of which Italian people of the South are allowed to roam. Before the plot begins to develop, Germi notoriously framed the story of Baron Fefè Cefalù with two segments dedicated to the Catholic Church and the Communist Party, showing the impossible task of emancipating themselves and the sui generis occupation carried out by proxy apparatuses. The same industrious termites building the population's ideological trenches return after the news regarding Baron Fefè's wife's flight, with a Communist cadre from the North inviting the locals to solve the problem of female emancipation 'like the Chinese did' and the family priest admonishing the faithful not to succumb to the licentious and dissolute morals of the recently screened *La dolce vita*. Germi's film is a snapshot of the fragmented identitarian puzzle, regarding first and foremost the South but expandable to the entire nation. Martin Clark writes about the hard bargaining that old institutions had to do in order to salvage their role:

> The modern world, with its material wealth and its claims to individual rights, had suddenly arrived. It could not easily be absorbed within the old hierarchical institutions. A 'crisis of authority' affected every institution – the factories and unions, the schools and universities, the family, the Church, the State. Italy was about to undergo a difficult and violent upheaval.[3]

The historian dedicates some of his most corrosive observations to Italy's education system: not only universities[4] but also the archaic high schools system, where the prestigious institutes, out of deference to the idealist inspiration of curricula, administered to students lethal doses of dead languages and almost no preparation in scientific disciplines. The humanist–jurisprudential character

of Italy's education comes under attack, for example, in *Una storia milanese*, where filmmaker Eriprando Visconti and writer Vittorio Sermonti, co-author of the screenplay and the dialogues, probe the generational uncertainty about the new emphasis on functionality and pragmatic efficiency and juxtapose them with the peasant landscape still coexisting with the industrial belts.

The centrality of family comes into question also in works like Bolognini's *Giovani mariti*, Gregoretti's *Le belle famiglie* (1965), and Ferreri's *El cochecito* (1960). *Giovani mariti* is a film where individual freedom is not sacrificed to the celebration of family as an institution, as it was in Matarazzo, and coincides with a honest adherence to the characters' complex personalities. In *Le belle famiglie* Gregoretti relentlessly attacks the miseries and insecurities of the 'Italian way' of patriarchy: the film consists of four uneven episodes, where one can find crass satire and subtle irony. In the first segment, called *Il principe azzurro*, Annie Girardot plays the lone female of a Sicilian family rich with crippled, retarded, and equally violent members constantly beating her. Told by the editor of a women's magazine to 'use fantasy to improve her life,' she 'decorates' life in the convent with her daydreams and decides to become a nun instead of marrying the monstrous man the family has handpicked as her husband. The second vignette is *La cernia*, where Gregoretti uses all of his perfidiousness to destroy the certainties of a Roman 'Latin lover,' who has a collapse of self-esteem after realizing that the German tourist he has 'seduced' is in fact living in an open relationship, and her husband is about to steal the girl he was desperately trying to conquer. *El cochecito* (1960) is the story of an old man who exterminates all of his family members because they seize the motorized coach he needs to spend time in with his handicapped friends. Ferreri prodigiously manages to balance the picture between light touches of dark humor and a gloomy outlook on family as the locus where freedom is obliterated. The elderly Don Fernando is presented as an unassuming type who is relatively distant from familial duties and reacquaints himself with instinctual needs like friendship. His choice to kill for the goal of warmth and vicinity to other people is shown by Ferreri as a profoundly ethical, one may say Kantian, manifestation of human nature.

Ferreri had already settled the score with marriage in *El pisito*, and would then return to the topic with the portmanteau *Marcia nuziale* (1966), in which four episodes of dysfunctional relationships 'exemplify a claustrophobic condition where thoughts and actions are regulated by automatic mechanisms that are harmful to the individual,' foreshadowing a post-human future where 'existence is meaningful only in the encounter with the inorganic, the mortuary, the nonexistent.'[5] Ferreri's Spanish films are a gallery of masks that the cineaste uses to teach us about the presence of horror behind reassuring semblances of respectability: desperation and frustration are always around the corner, and the supporting structure of an 'ordered' life can only be a more or less

disguised pathology. The filmmaker expands his reflection on the impossibility of 'natural' man–woman relations in *L'harem* (1967), a metaphysical chamber horror about a woman, played by Carroll Baker, 'collecting' in a villa four men – three lovers and a homosexual with ceremonial and decorative functions – who soon forge an alliance against her and ultimately force her to jump off a cliff and die. Originally thought and shot as a comedy, in its final cut *L'harem* became a reflection on the brutal substrate of medieval power relations and archaic rituals of exclusion underlying the sophistication of modern men. The claustrophobic use of space – characters are confined in a decadent and inhospitable villa in Dubrovnik – allows Ferreri to exacerbate the cruelty of desire, exposing the mandate of the male protagonists' phallic community as a sadistic pursuit of identity, joyfully destroying the female threat. *L'harem* is also a broader reassessment of filming tecniques in the light of Godard's *Masculin feminine*, made the previous year: Ferreri intentionally leaves lacunae in the story, delaying the resolution of scenes, dragging out inessential dialogues and gestures, indulging in fetishizing shots of Baker, toying with metaphorical avenues – the young cheetah kept on a leash – and alternating declamatory moments to hermetic passages and ellipses. After *Dillinger è morto*, the last word on the impossibility of the couple will be pronounced by Ferreri in *Il seme dell'uomo* (1969). If Visconti escalated the movement to new cultural codes by tragic explosions of violence, and Antonioni immersed his exacerbated portraits of inadequacy in a social environment that has not learned yet how to react to fundamental changes, Ferreri surpassed both filmmakers by placing men in the midst of a post-human transition. *Il seme dell'uomo* is a post-apocalyptic essay on the unnaturalness of human relationships, causing only exploitation and suffering.

Angelo Restivo has called Antonioni and Pasolini the two filmmakers who best transmitted the sense of dynamic social change intrinsic to the economic miracle: Antonioni by electing the bourgeoisie as his privileged object of research, and Pasolini by looking at a proletariat whose culture was being vampirized by upper classes that in turn are trapped in repressed and precarious roles (*Teorema*). In Antonioni's films, the depth of field captures characters nested into the textures of the landscape, signifying the viscosity of the link between man and things and the other men in the frame, a link that is never stable and has to be incessantly renegotiated. In *L'avventura* and *L'eclisse* (1962), the landscape points to the permanence of a decodable/intelligible structure that man is not interested in investigating anymore. This fracture creates the separation between the characters and the world;[6] hence, the silent interrogation that characters are unable to answer. Breaking the teleology of linearity and deconstructing narrative coherence with a strategy of under-reaction, events do not mold a learning process but remain opaque, in a pattern of inconsequentiality. Sometimes characters conjure up a threat that is not

there; for example, in *L'avventura* when Anna, as the boat with the company of wealthy couples and friends is approaching the island of Lisca Bianca, pretends that there is a shark in the water as she is swimming. The schizophrenic search for some missing meaning or justification of one's state of being seems a cipher of the 'changing relations between character and milieu in a context appropriate to the far-reaching cultural and social transformations wrought by industrialization and the "economic miracle."'[7] The disappearance of Anna can be interpreted as a reference to the death of Anna Magnani in *Roma città aperta* – as 'a realization of the possibilities opened up by the neorealist aesthetic'[8] – or a desperate act of self-assertion for someone who wants to be more present in the life of others as a modifier, a device later used by Pasolini in *Teorema*. The loss of a friend/rival/loved one, depending on which member of the party, ignites an absurd search that is treated by Antonioni as a metaphor for the unfruitfulness of every search, especially of one's 'soul,' whose fluctuation is instinctual and abhors the superfluity of inherited culture. *L'avventura* is a film that shows the fragility of traditional social ties and values because of their continuous need of approval, and the imaginary shark in the sea is a projection of the anxiety attached to the missing confirmation. Even if Antonioni's proverbial 'alienation' is not of Marxist origin, his bourgeoisie is a class that has stopped trying to understand itself and, as in Marx, constantly lies to itself to cover its shortcomings. Antonioni's characters are pre-schizophrenics who cannot exclude the background noise of towns and nature from their disgregated consciousness wherein things are watching us and we cannot penetrate them anymore. Thus, we have the visual hallucinations of Giuliana in *Deserto rosso* (1964), where the poisonous colors of industry have supplanted the colors of nature and we are not sure whether to trust or not the things that Giuliana sees.

Antonioni's suffusion of space reverberates in many films by disparate authors, like De Sica's *Il tetto* (1955) or Paolo Spinola's *La fuga* (1964). Antonioni also inspired Rossellini for one of his least polished products, the erratic *Anima nera* (1962) starring Vittorio Gassman and Eleonora Rossi Drago. The result of the mismatched Rossellini and Giuseppe Patroni Griffi – a stage writer with a preference for aestheticizing decadent stories of lust and erotic scandal – *Anima nera* curiously puts on display the clumsiness of Rossellini when adjusting to an unfamiliar method, with the usual dispersive screenplay and contouring characters belonging to a high bourgeois or aristocratic milieu. In a related matter, Emiliano Morreale sees another Antonionian tendency where 'objects overwhelm characters'[9] in a general lack of human presence – in works such as Giuseppe Patroni Griffi's *Il mare* (1962), Enzo Battaglia's *Gli arcangeli* (1963), Massimo Franciosa and Pasquale Festa Campanile's *Un tentativo sentimentale* (1963), Marco Vicario's *Le ore nude*, and Piero Vivarelli's *Il vuoto* (1964). Franco Rossi's *Smog* (1962), with its

depiction of a dehumanized Los Angeles – probably inspired by the ambiences of *La notte* – could also be inscribed in this group. However, those are movies unfolding in a traditional narrative style, where the horror and continuous interruption of meaning one finds in Antonioni are mostly limited to pensive dialogues and neurotic reactions.

A true 'opera cosmo' is *Nostra Signora dei Turchi* (1968) by theater actor and author Carmelo Bene. Paradigmatic in his iconoclast fury, Bene transfigured his provincial origins into a signifier of the superstitious, pompously rhetorical, and baroquely religious Italian identity. With *Nostra Signora dei Turchi*, Bene put on display his anti-humanistic and neo-avant-gardist poetics, rejecting 'all principles of consistency or eternity, of textual permanency.'[10] *Nostra Signora dei Turchi* is the ultimate cinematic rendition of the melodramatic finitude of man and the futile exercise of aspiring to something 'sublime.' Carmelo Bene offers his own version of postmodernity with the calculated fusion of immanence and transcendence, as in the famous boat scene where he instructs Saint Margherita about her make-up, appearance, her 'flight,' and interaction with dead people. In that desecrating and sneering conversation, religion is essentially seen as delirious performance, as queer masquerade, an inspired interpretation of the lunatic who is acting it out. But *Nostra Signora dei Turchi* is not concerned with religion per se: for Bene, the image is a pliable mass of play dough that he deforms with his own body and his own voice(s) in an attempt to dissolve the subject. Paola Boioli argued that Bene's main organizing principle is similar to Georges Bataille's concept of *dépense*, or rejection of the utility principle:

> The conquest of Bene's cinema is *vaneggiamento*, the making empty, which could be the most intense and desperate thing in the world.[11]

With his simultaneous cinema of waste and accumulation clashing against each other, Bene patents an exorcism of the real centered on the ostentation of kitsch and a flair for the repetitive and the decadent, whose ultimate call is to expose the anti-tragic, pathetic, risible nature of Italian culture. Bene's cinema is Deleuzian in its appropriation of clichés, which saturate the image and are then 'exploded' and drained until they are consumed. Through an ironic viewpoint – participative in Bene, distant in Fellini – the filmmaker shares with the director of *La dolce vita* and *8½* the preoccupation for personal and creative freedom, and the idea that identity is an artifice over which we have no control, provided by a continuous reinvention/improvisation of the self.

Another picture where the subjective voice of the filmmaker is so expansive and unfiltered as to make a classification impossible is Marco Bellocchio's debut movie, *I pugni in tasca* (1965). As enthusiastically lauded by young critics thirsty for whatever manifestation of a new cinema in world traditions

as it was loathed by peers like Antonioni and Buñuel, *I pugni in tasca* occupies a special and still puzzling place in Italy's history of film. It is the story of a family languishing under the pall of putrefying rural, Catholic values, whose members are literally disposed of by one of the sons with amusing indifference to make room for the life and aspirations of the apparently only 'healthy' male member. At first the movie was hailed as a refreshing representation of a twisted but essentially much needed irruption of *élan vital* in the identitarian discourse on family and patriarchal values. The usual reductionist interpretations based on petty, basic political arguments commended Bellocchio from the Left for his remarkable, systematic annihilation of archaic simulacra: then, a wave of revisionist criticism ultimately labelled Alessandro, the family executioner, as a Fascist because of his rough-and-ready attitude and authoritarian demeanor when setting in motion his lethal machinations. *I pugni in tasca* comes across as corrosive and spiritual at the same time, a revitalization of an extinct cultural order that can be achieved only through the bloody, cleansing ritual of (self-)sacrifice. Such revitalization is at best dubious insofar as the last man standing – the 'normal,' hard-working, insensitive, and despotic Augusto – seems a perfect prototype of a parasitic, all-flattening bourgeois, as he is engaged to a socialite who lures him to the lights of the 'big city' (the provincial, lethargic Piacenza). Bellocchio intersperses the ghastly indifference of family life with grotesque, even buffoonish episodes fraught with coldly determined violence, and stages the events against a background overloaded with popular artifacts and worn-out signs of familial tradition and Catholic inculturation. Contradictory and torn like a Dostoevskian character, Alessandro the executioner is at times scared, sneering, hateful and self-hateful, painfully sensitive, naïve, and demonic: he looks like a lost puppet, parading himself at a nightclub, with the blazing white of the environment exposing his tormented inadequacy, and soon to recover an apocalyptic aura while casually laying his feet on the mother's coffin, just a few hours after pushing her down a ravine. We often encounter him when he is furiously driving the family car, but the dynamism associated with the automobile does not take the protagonist anywhere in particular. The car is not even a sterile instrument of narcissistic obsession: in Alessandro's plan – he fantasizes about driving the entire family minus Augusto down a ravine – it is his potential for quick, collective death that comes in handy. His life, like the film, is a bachelor machine that destroys meaning as it tries to create it, reducing the event of *flânerie* to the spastic writhing of an epileptic. The use of Violetta's hymn of perpetual freedom from Verdi's *La Traviata* during a final, fatal bout of epilepsy is a Benjaminian commentary on the loss of auratic authoritativeness and works as the ironic background noise of Alessandro's death. In the end, *I pugni in tasca* seems capable of conjuring a prophecy and remains an upside-down representation of the careless *joie de vivre* one can see in the early Truffaut:

> The entire movie is fraught with ambivalences and contradictions, metaphor of a greater dialectic between revolution and restoration. Such dialectics live above all inside the character of Alessandro, but not only there. His confused rebellious actions have in themselves the germs of a more aware cultural and political revolution, but they are destined to have no consequence and actually to confirm the social context from which they are born.[12]

There are also echoes of *La dolce vita* in the parody of the iconography of the economic boom and of the obsession with one's image: Alessandro almost quotes Mastroianni's Marcello verbatim when he says that he has 'thousands of ideas,' in a passage reminiscent of *La dolce vita*'s last sequence, the party at Riccardo's.

Pasolini's *Teorema* (1968) would later offer an exhaustive interpretation of the state of crisis of the bourgeoisie as a class. The displaced desolation of a typical upper-class family is exposed when all of its members are visited by a mysterious stranger enticing them into erotic exchange. Mobilized by the encounter with the guest, the repressed material erupts as forgotten energy, as sublimated instinct, prompting each family member to a dramatic change: the father turns over his factory to the workers and then literally undresses himself of everything in Milan's train station; the mother solicits young men on the streets for casual sexual intercourse; the son pursues a vocation of informal artist, only to discover his pretentiousness and total lack of talent; the daughter fall into a catatonic state of immobility and is taken away to a psychiatric hospital. Only the maid seems to make a spiritual use of the faculties liberated by the stranger, turning into a goddess of renewal and fertility. In his Marcusian analysis of civilization, Pasolini seems to believe that '[s]ociety as it is now harbors within itself its own contradictions and its liberating alternatives,'[13] an aspect noted also by Viola Brisolin who writes that

> [i]n *Teorema*, after the departure of the mysterious guest, all the members of the bourgeois family bestowed with his gifts of love sink into a state of dejected confusion and mourning. The sacred dimension of life is expunged from modern society. Its significance cannot be appreciated, not even fleetingly grasped; it can be only be apprehended as dispossession, as fall from plenitude and grace.[14]

And in fact the barren landscape of the volcanic plain will soon give way to the infernal realms of *Salò*, where Pasolini does not harbour any illusion in any form of 'sacred.'[15] The father walking through the deserted space symbolizes an enigma, a suspended state of being but also a distance that can be covered, eventually mooring to a possible future with a different mode of living one's

subjectivity, a different political praxis, and without the repressive framework that *Teorema* deconstructs. The desert recurs in *Porcile* (1969), a moral tale in which Pasolini allegorizes the devouring nature of power, its capability of reproducing itself as well as its talent in disguising itself as a true democracy and picking – and toying with – inoffensive 'enemies.' In her close reading of *Porcile*, Simona Bondavalli argues that in Pasolini's eyes the missing ingredient from the youth protests of 1968 was a poetic look 'which re-establishes the opacity of the world and makes us aware of its complexity,'[16] nailing the audience to a position of witnessing complicity.[17]

Practices of authorial intrusion aimed at establishing the Italian bourgeoisie as a lethal infection characterize Pasolini's entire cinema: the 'subjective' moments of *Edipo Re* (1967) are the signature looking-from-the-outside shot, framed by windows, as in *Salò*. They suture the ongoing scene to the world outside, implying a historical reference to the pervasiveness of human actions, as though Pasolini was catching the creation of power and domination in its making. Such shots also nail viewers to a contemplative position of passive spectatorship and introduce the issue of personal responsibility: we can, like a numb television audience, 'comfortably' witness the last-ditch, horrific upsurge of a totalitarian regime. At the beginning of *Teorema*, the breastfeeding scene cuts to a sequence where the jumping cameras insist on trees, possibly the same trees which, in *Appunti per un'Orestiade africana*, Pasolini wanted to entrust with the role of the furies, standing for an irrational, returning, and cyclically recurring past that cannot be reconciled with reason, progress, revolution, or democracy. In *Edipo Re*, Oedipus has a peculiar way of pursuing the fulfilment of his tragic prophecy: he always looks confused, stranded in a land with which he is not familiar. His first reaction to the words of the Delphic Oracle is of perplexed hilarity. The complexity of *Edipo Re* is first in its distance from Pasolini's proletarian utopia, and then in its multifaceted protagonist, emotional and contradictory at times but with some precisely defined traits. *Edipo Re* is a complex allegory fluctuating between personal considerations and ahistorical implications: he is a victim and a murderer, an invincible hero and a fragile cripple, a fraud and – eventually – a man looking for truth. The film, framed with an autobiographical reference to Pasolini's real parents and social milieu, was in the filmmaker's intention an aestheticized and humorous selection of Oedipus' crucial moments, his dubious deeds as unreconciled actions of courage and fear, cowardice and terror. The movie has generated many fascinating interpretations. Besides Oedipus as a double of the author and petit-bourgeois intellectual, Marcello Gigante writes

> perhaps we can speak about the legend or, better, the saga of a dead man. In that sense, Oedipus is a symbol of the bourgeoisie. Something more than Voltaire's fool, impatient iconoclast, and certainly even more

> than the everyman of a contemporary philologist, Gennaro Perrotta, who states that 'Oedipus' fate is everybody's fate.'[18]

By privileging violence over understanding, approval over rationality, performance over leadership, and aimless chance over responsibility, Pasolini did not want to make Oedipus a true intellectual but perhaps a different type of intellectual, a bourgeois intellectual whose function is not to seek for answers but to justify the status quo. In the light of Oedipus' apparent intention of remaining a pawn of higher powers, Stephen Snyder has interpreted the scene where he is conducted before a young naked girl as an allegory of self-imposed, regressive objectification: '[t]aken as a comment upon Oedipus's destiny, the scene implies that his failure to act more self-reliantly – his retainment of protective innocence – is merely prostitution.'[19] With *Edipo Re*, Pasolini appropriates Gian Battista Vico's idea of myth as the first manifestation of history: unlike the preposterous insistence on the proletarian community in the early works, in this movie the filmmaker seems engaged in the presentation of what Karol Kerényi would call a genuine myth, versus its technicized form as we see in *Accattone* or *Mamma Roma*. It is a myth which, in the mythical-mystical system of the poet as defined by Josef Rauscher, leads to an enlightning 'revelation of being.'[20]

Carlo Veo's *Pesci d'oro e bikini d'argento* (1961) is the actualization of Pasolini's nightmare, the effacement of regional cultures sacrificed on the altar of bourgeois hegemony. The movie, regarding a telephone radio quiz in which participants who are able to guess song titles get a golden fish as first prize and a silver bikini as second prize, may seem like a mere pretext to deploy a number of B-singers and string together some innocuous comic episodes. The movie could be hailed ironically as evidence of Italy's passage into a postmodern, 'remediated' society because of the collapsed, compressed space: each song has a strong regional grounding, both pictorial – touristic videos are shown as the singers perform – and idiomatic, with tunes peppered with dialectal words or sung directly in dialect. At the end of the movie, the masked figures representing the five regions mentioned in the songs – Lazio, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, Campania, and Liguria – are called by the hostess of the radio quiz. Five costumed figures appear, and then sprint to the starting blocks of a swimming pool: when the masked figures undress, they reveal five gorgeous girls ready to jump into the water, subsuming the regional difference to erotic consumption.

Historical: The Process of Unification, the Legacy of World War II and the Question of National Synthesis

The obvious reference in Bellocchio's ironic use of Verdi's love and historical dramas as frames to interpret characters' motivations is *Senso*. Visconti was

Figure 65 Carlo Veo's *Pesci d'oro e bikini d'argento* (1961) is a bizarre attempt at regional homogenization, to be attained through the totalizing mobilization of dialectal pop tunes and mass tourism.

one of the filmmakers returning to the artificial nature of the Risorgimento: *Senso* stresses the lack of involvement of popular forces and the artificiality of the aristocratic world, with their participation to the revolutionary process dictated by financial interests or ill-conceived melodramatic love. The explosion of anxieties is not limited to relational processes and from a historical perspective the uncertainty may run even deeper. The exasperating debate on the 'values of the resistance' notwithstanding, a crucial question was looming among the problems the young nation was trying to address: the myth of its very foundation. Besides Visconti, Rossellini also investigated with *Vanina Vanini* and *Viva l'Italia!*, both shot in 1961, the absence of a vision centered around common good and the cancer of opportunism as a national trait that no revolt could ever eliminate. Rossellini seems to share with Visconti the idea that the Italian bourgeoisie is not an enlightened class ready to fight for social equity but a conservative force stifling the dynamism of the population's lower strata. In *Vanina Vanini*, Rossellini clarifies how the Church came into direct collision with the forces pushing for the unification of Italy. The filmmaker dismantles the religious–cultural identity sponsored by the Church and elaborates a vision consistent with the control on people's conscience mentioned by Luciano Canfora:

> The Italian case is a peculiar one. After centuries of fragmentation and a painfully-achieved national reunification, that for a long time was not truly in place (the 'lower people' of the Risorgimento did not take part in those risings), Italy was then brutally pushed – in the first half of the twentieth century – towards an actual reunification thanks to the irruption on the scene of mass political parties, first the fascist then the antifascist ones. Those parties did at least as much if not more than the Church, whose goal was not to unify the country anyway but to achieve a long lasting control on consciences.[21]

Rossellini had the daunting task of blending together his uninhibited criticism of the Church, his pessimistic view of the making of history and the melodramatic fortunes of the love affair, scripted after a short story written by Stendhal and resembling the plot of *Senso*. *Vanina Vanini* is far more convincing than the Garibaldi 'epic' *Viva l'Italia*, whose events were told in an uncompromising and brutally 'realistic' way by Florestano Vancini in his virulent *Bronte: Cronaca di un massacro che i libri di storia non hanno raccontato* (1972).

A plethora of works reopened the debate on Fascism, albeit without proposing hypotheses on its most controversial aspects, such as popular participation, revolutionary spirit as a byproduct of the French Revolution, the proletarian-versus-bourgeois nature of the regime, etc., all probed with renewed interest starting in the 1970s. Incidentally, it is also necessary to notice that, judging by titles like Guido Chiesa's *Il partigiano Johnny* (2000), Italian film seems incapable of a courageous and dispassionate analysis even today: the most daring picture probably remains Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's *La notte di San Lorenzo* (1982). Dealing with the Liberation war and its controversial legacy, the bitter disillusionment of the Rome episode in *Paisà* and the ambiguous role of the American army in Italy were developed into a bleak vision of violence. While Vittorio Cottafavi's *Una donna ha ucciso* (1952) took the premise established in Rossellini's movie to its natural consequence, adapting for the screen the true story of a Neapolitan woman killing a US officer at the end of their affair, the dark comedy *Siamo uomini o caporali?* (1955) starring Totò portrayed the Americans in Italy as violent colonizers. The US captain played by Paolo Stoppa is just a profiteer and a rapist, blowing a cold wind of hate and resentment through the relationship between the Italians and their cumbersome father figure. *Siamo uomini o caporali?* is possibly the apex of Totò's cinema career, where his kinetic persona combines the surreal and the rebellious with a highly ethical stance as he thwarts the perfidious Stoppa, who in the movie plays an American officer, the head of the German lager, a Fascist militiaman, an industrialist, a tabloid director, and a minor Cinecittà 'ranch-hand.' The list is a comprehensive compendium of almost all the petty, pompous, hypocritical power figures Totò had successfully dismantled in his career, a quasi-Chaplinesque enterprise as noted by Gianni Borgna.[22] Among the most representative titles dedicated to the Fascist *ventennio* and to World War II are Valerio Zurlini's *Estate violenta* (1959) and *Le soldatesse* (1965); Luigi Comencini's *La ragazza di Bube* (1963) and *Tutti a casa* (1960); Dino Risi's *La marcia su Roma* (1963); Nelo Risi's *La strada più lunga* (1965); Roberto Rossellini's *Il generale Della Rovere* (1959) and *Era notte a Roma* (1960); Gianni Puccini's *Il carro armato dell'8 settembre* (1960); Vittorio De Sica's *La ciociara* (1960); Luigi Zampa's *Anni facili* (1953), *Anni difficili* (1948), and *Gli anni ruggenti* (1962); Nanni Loy's *Un giorno da leoni* (1961) and *Le quattro giornate di Napoli* (1962); Florestano Vancini's *La lunga notte*

del '43 (1960); Giuliano Montaldo's *Tiro al piccione* (1962); Carlo Lizzani's *Achtung! Banditi!* (1951), *Cronache di poveri amanti* (1954), *Il gobbo* (1960), *L'oro di Roma* (1961) and *Il processo di Verona* (1963); Alfredo Giannetti's *1943: Un incontro* (1969); Gianfranco De Bosio's *Il terrorista* (1963); Gillo Pontecorvo's *Kapò* (1960); Giuseppe De Santis' *Italiani brava gente* (1964); and Luciano Salce's *Il federale* (1961). Numerous montage films[23] were also made, extracting the absurdity of the Fascist regime from original Luce newsreels, propaganda pieces, and amateur movies. After *Benito Mussolini* by Pasquale Prunas and *Benito Mussolini: anatomia di un dittatore* by Mino Loy, both made in 1962, the most stimulating film, because of its coherent ideological stance aimed at exposing complicities and collective responsibilities, still remains Lino Del Fra's *All'armi siam fascisti*, also made in 1962. *All'armi siam fascisti* is a pastiche of footage ranging from the early twentieth century to the *ventennio* to archive material documenting the resurgent Right of the 1960s. The commentary is by Franco Fortini, a poet and intellectual giving voice to the Marxist faction of the anti-Fascist movement. Del Fra's film offers a militant interpretation of Fascism as a capitalist coup d'état, insisting on the responsibilities of those who chose not to pick any side. Apart from some declamatory passages, in its finest moments *All'armi siam fascisti* carefully extracts and exposes the duplicity and the connivances of those lobbies – Confindustria, the Catholic Church, the royal family – that paved the way of Mussolini's rise. The crimes of the regime, its gratuitous violence and repression – with *La lunga notte del '43* as the only notable exception – remained largely unaddressed: self-acquittal and ridicule often replaced research and acknowledgement of historical responsibilities. In Lucio Fulci's *Maniaci* (1961), Umberto D'Orsi plays a literary author trying to make it big, asking colleague Enrico Maria Salerno – now living in a luxury mansion – for help to make his works on World War II more palatable. Salerno ardently insists on the necessity of spicing up of the war stories with ingredients such as sex and profanity, stating that 'art is not representation of reality, art is an avalanche! . . . Only by living this life inside the bourgeoisie I can destroy this world! . . . I destroy, and they pay . . . But enough with the Resistance, write about sex, about real things, *resisting is useless*!'

It also seemed prohibitive to excavate the myth of the Resistance in order to re-evaluate its apparently untarnishable positive values, not least because it was a relatively obscure period of Italian history – the tense confrontation years from 1945 to 1948. Military pacification of the partisan factions came only with the first political elections after the fall of Fascism: family feuds, personal revenges, incarcerations, political retaliations, even pre-emptive assassinations in the light of a future rise of the PCI to power occurring during those chaotic times claimed a number of victims, with estimations by some historians such as Gianpaolo Pansa to be as high as in the thousands. The uncertainty

over the foundational myths of post-World War II Italy, coupled with the short-lived optimism for a harmonic development of the nation, both socially and economically, prompted filmmakers to look at those traumatic events in history sometimes as missed opportunities, sometimes as inspirational moments of national pride and cohesion in the partisan fight for freedom and against Fascism. Robert Hewison writes about the double movement of hermeneutics of the past returning at times of anxiety and decline:

> The impulse to preserve the past is part of the impulse to preserve the self. Without knowing where we have been, it is difficult to know where we are going. The past is the foundation of individual and collective identity, objects from the past are the source of significance as cultural symbols. Continuity between past and present creates a sense of sequence out of aleatory chaos and, since change is inevitable, a stable system of ordered meanings enables us to cope with both innovation and decay. The nostalgic impulse is an important agency in adjustment to crisis, it is a social emollient and reinforces national identity when confidence is weakened or threatened.[24]

There is another war movie rising above that long list: Mario Monicelli's *La grande guerra* (1959), a reflection on Italy's dirtiest and bloodiest conflict, World War I. National synthesis became the laboratory for cineastes like Monicelli, creatively using the film industry to substitute for the institutions that were struggling at providing suitable cultural perspectives. Monicelli's ethical vision was to salvage the amorphous nation through examples of integrity, resourcefulness, and solidarity, where men find within themselves the resources to overcome authoritarian cultures, as portrayed in *I compagni* (1963), about the unionized workers' struggle in late nineteenth-century Turin. In *La grande guerra*, with the Roman and the Milanese soldiers carrying out their duty without betraying the country, and ultimately finding death with a final act of heroism that they seemed incapable of producing throughout their entire military service, Monicelli attempted a productive synthesis of diverse regional cultures to found a shared heritage in Italian history. The same fusion of heterogeneous materials seems to take place also on the cinematic level, where the histrionic traits of Vittorio Gassman and Alberto Sordi's acting are kept in check and genres like the melodrama, the war movie, comedy, and tragedy are intertwined to convey a comprehensive and complex impression of national character. *La grande guerra* is 'quietly' patriotic without excesses in nationalistic or chauvinistic pride or pacifist rhetoric. Not only devastating for human losses and the future declining birth rate, and catastrophic for the economy, World War I was also the 'mutilated victory' Italy did not capitalize on, leading to a repressed feeling of anger which would later be

one of the causes igniting the Fascist dystopia. But unlike Francesco Rosi in *Uomini contro* (1970), Monicelli did not focus specifically on the bloodbath (Italy had about 650,000 dead soldiers and almost 1,000,000 wounded, often due to disastrous tactical decisions taken by officers who were indifferent to the number of men lost in each attack) or the insane cruelty of state institutions (the c*arabinieri* police were often called to execute deserters, and platoons with guns drawn deployed behind battalions mounting the senseless assaults). Monicelli seems to find a virtuous balance between the choral allegory of the regional identities coming together and the practical demands of history. The fact that World War I was the last noncolonial war Italy won is always in the background, yet at the same time *La grande guerra* is not 'grandiose history' but stories of humble and marginal men, an elegiac hymn to the moral resources two cowards can find in themselves. If Rossellini's *La prise de pouvoir par Louis XIV* (1966) was consistent with Fernand Braudel's analysis of long-term changes in cultures and mentalities, *La grande guerra* seems almost an Italian version of a Tolstoian war epic with its futile battles and uncertain goals. Judging from the vantage point of today, one can say that Monicelli was a visionary. The contemporary revanchist revival in many Italian subcultures such as neo-folk and punk music about *la sporca guerra*, with its corollary of pride and negated territorial expansion, is once again an indication of the problematic nature of the Resistance and its values. Monicelli was not alone in insisting on the importance of providing a solid foundation for the fragmented spectrum of local identities. He followed the example of Visconti, who, in *Senso*, created a moment of cooperation between Marquis Ussoni and a Neapolitan lieutenant and by the same token maximized the lack of cohesiveness of Livia when she declares herself a 'veneta' before denouncing Franz. The independentist Ussoni asks the officer of the Piedmontese army if he is from Southern Italy, in a moment of shared patriotism soon to be destroyed by the refusal of the army to let civil volunteers join its ranks, thereby – as Marcus noted – denying the popular nature of Italy's unification and setting the stage for future tribulations. The foundational insolvencies that the battle for independence at Custoza in 1866 and the defeat of Caporetto in 1917 share in terms of authoritarianism of the army command and denied contributions were noticed by Claretta Tonetti, who argues that with *Senso* Visconti put on display 'a very unfortunate debut for the new nation and an ominous presentiment of a much greater disaster that was to come during the First World War.'[25]

One year after *La grande guerra*, Luigi Comencini filmed *Tutti a casa*, a paradigmatic work about the dilemma every Italian had to face on September, 8 1943, when a separate peace treaty was signed by Marshal Badoglio and the Allies, and Germany, which had a significant number of troops already stationed on Italian territory, became an enemy overnight. The distance

between the two resolutions of the world conflicts could not be more startling. If Monicelli was capable of preserving the comedic talent of Alberto Sordi and Vittorio Gassman while at the same time conveying the sense of catastrophe of the war and valor of the soldiers, Comencini chooses to repress the collaborationism with the Nazis by having Sordi say, at the end of the movie, that he 'never said Heil Hitler,' and to swiftly and heroically embrace the partisans' side. However, Comencini knew how to subvert and provoke: at face value, the title can be interpreted as the soldiers' legitimate longing for home after an ill-advised war, punctuated by various defeats and characterized by insufficient equipment and a derisory attitude from the German allies. But 'everybody home' hides a more disquieting meaning. It is an admonition against the Italian people's ethical cheekiness, comfortably fixating on the idea that one can claim no responsibility for the mistakes he made: the same people who let the Nazis own Italy are now staying at home instead of fighting the ally turned enemy. In similar fashion, to avoid facing the issue with much needed frankness, Lieutenant Gaetano Martino of Valerio Zurlini's *Le soldatesse* (1965) says that 'he doesn't do politics' when asked the question about his affiliation with Fascism. Comencini and Zurlini did not show the same courage exhibited by Giorgio Moser who, with the outstanding *Violenza segreta* (1963) portrayed the Italian community in Ethiopia in 1958 and stripped Italian colonialism of its hypocritical claims of progress and democratic advancement.

The dubious distinction between Fascist insanity and upright soldiers and officers of the Italian army returns in *Italiani brava gente*, a film about Italy's most disastrous military enterprise, the campaign to invade the Soviet Union alongside the Germans. Even though it is affected by declamatory rhetoric, some moments of *Italiani brava gente* are among De Santis' finest achievements: the filmmaker takes his quest for the creation of a national-popular cinema to the extreme, making a point of creating a class consciousness among 'simple' people regardless of their nationality. The same occurs from the standpoint of national synthesis, with a vast number of Italian regions represented in the ARMIR battalions, where soldiers do not address each other by name but simply call each other 'siciliano,' 'romano,' or 'pugliese.' Focusing again on the issue of responsibility, Florestano Vancini's *La lunga notte del '43* dealt directly with the tangle of fears, indifference, and factual complicities that made not only Fascism possible but also embedded it – persistently, Vancini seems to say – in Italy's national identity. Based on Giorgio Bassani's *Cinque storie ferraresi*, Vancini's brilliant debut is an exploration of a city's spiritual failure when dealing with brutal Fascist assassinations and their intact 'legacy,' far from being clarified, let alone vindicated, years after the end of the war in a democratic Italy. When merciless Fascist Carlo Aretusi, played by Italian cinema great Gino Cervi, decides to seize the power in Ferrara, his Machiavellian intelligence advises him to entrust one of his minions to kill the *gerarca* in charge,

and to put the blame on the local anti-Fascist intelligentsia. Franco Villani (Gabriele Ferzetti) then sees his old father Avvocato Villani brutally seized by some Fascist militia, sent by Aretusi in his new capacity: the militia storms the city and kills eleven men in cold blood, Avvocato Villani among them. Without intervening, Villani chooses to emigrate and flees. The only witness of the mass assassination is pharmacist Pino Barilari, a disabled man, who spends his time scanning passersby from his window, and who that night also sees his wife Anna (a magnificent Belinda Lee in her first and unfortunately last 'serious' role before a premature death) return from a rendez-vous with Franco Villani. Barilari – played by Enrico Maria Salerno, who, as always, confers to his character the torments of a divided conscience and ultimately ends up not taking any disruptive action – refuses to testify against Aretusi, putting his masculine honor before the struggle for freedom and truth in a tortured time. But the finale is possibly even more pessimistic: when Villani – already jeered at by his own brother on the night of the raid because of his passiveness – visits Ferrara during a trip from his new home in Switzerland and points out to his wife and kids the plaque commemorating the death of his father, he is recognized by an aged Aretusi who treats him like an old acquaintance. The two exchange banal pleasantries, and at the end of the conversation Villani explains to his wife that, yes, Aretusi was a Fascist one day, but more than anything he was a 'mostly harmless' derelict. The mark of shame is not only in the misperception, but in the very 'role' of Aretusi who, caught cursing with a crowd of bystanders at a televised soccer game where the national team is playing, also seems a permanent part of the culture, colorful and 'innocuous' like the national sport.

If Neorealism could surreptitiously become, as Sorlin mentioned, a 'genre' successfully meshed together with popular favorites, then any war movie praising the partisans could be labelled 'Neorealist' by default. One of the most successful treatments of the Neorealist Resistance 'compromised' with practices of spectacularization is Nanni Loy's *Le quattro giornate di Napoli*, which deals with the Neapolitan four-day popular revolt against the invading Germans, and is rich with episodes of heroism, reconciliation, and sacrifice. Loy's film is a magnificent example of Rossellinian emphasis on the documentary approach[26] injected with spectacular, choral scenes of common citizens regaining their dignity by fighting the invaders, strung together with smaller, coherent plots of melodramatic inspiration. A miraculous balance was pulled off by Loy thanks to a healthy dose of 'myths' and treatments inspired by *Roma città aperta*: the figure of twelve-year-old Gennarino Capuozzo, killed while fighting the German tanks; humorous episodes like the one with the Resistance fighter harassed by his wife while throwing hand grenades from the barricades; the love stories of the humble and poor people; even the sudden death of an important character, an Italian navy soldier played by Jean Sorel, just a few minutes into the movie. Loy was also able to weave in the amazing episode of a group

of youths fleeing their detention center, successfully conducting guerrilla operations and eventually welcoming their disciplinarian director into their ranks for an attack against a German platoon. Loy's extraordinary achievement was described by Lorenzo Pellizzari as a picture where

> it seems like we are witnessing a miraculous war reportage or, better, of a people's war, and of a very particular people going to war as if it were a representation of puppet theater, with the only difference that blood – shed by the Neapolitans and exacted from the Germans – is real.[27]

Thanks to its 'graceful' Hollywoodization of history, *Le quattro giornate di Napoli* did so well in the United States that Samuel Goldwyn offered Loy a contract to direct similar war movies for his studios.

Giuliano Montaldo's *Tiro al piccione* tells the story of Fascist loyalists and militiamen from their side. Through the eyes of Marco Laudato, whose Fascist faith is never fully explained nor put into question, we have an anticipation of Louis Malle's *Lacombe, Lucien* (1974) and its reduction of 'grand history' to a respectful acknowledgement of subjective reasons. Besides the usual melodramatic burden *Tiro al piccione* is a laudable attempt to bring Antonioni's cinema of silent feelings into the war scenario, using it as a key to understanding the most painful period of recent Italian history. The theme of September 8 as a failed maturity test for the Italian people is also in Francesco Maselli's *Gli sbandati*: 1943, used as a divide and as an omen for personal responsibilities and introspection is also the year of the events in *Estate violenta*. *Estate violenta* is a love story between a widow – with the same actress of *Tiro al piccione*, Eleonora Rossi Drago – and the twenty-year-old son of a Fascist *gerarca*, with the war in the background. It exemplifies the cinematic temperie of the late 1950s: one marvels at the command Zurlini demonstrates in the complex distribution of volumes and characters, all interrogated by the camera during deep-focus long takes à la William Wyler, while at the same time one has to admit that some contrived passages in the script could have been taken directly from the most predictable patriarchal melodramas by Raffaello Matarazzo, and that the acting is often based on old-school, caricatured types.

A different perspective is provided by Gillo Pontecorvo's *Kapò*, a movie about the degradation of the human being in concentration camps. Pontecorvo does not belong to a recognizable tendency or group of filmmakers: his first full-length fiction film, *La grande strada azzurra* (1957), is a vibrant Neorealist tale of fishermen, reminiscent in its most 'ethnographic' sequences of Visconti's *La terra trema*. He was, like De Santis, interested in stories of wide political meaning, often interpreted through the Marxist doctrine, and with De Santis he shared an admiration for Soviet cinema, especially Alexander Dovzhenko. The spectacularization of death and the ideologic schematism created a hot

debate about the movie, with Jacques Rivette's decimation as the heaviest criticism leveled at the film. But *Kapò* has the courage to translate on the screen, at least in part, the ideas of Primo Levi, the survivor who was a chemist by trade but also, after the camp, a writer relentlessly publishing works on and discussing the perspective on life after mass extermination. Primo Levi's most famous book is *Se questo è un uomo*, the title of which reveals the main obsession in his works about concentration camps – the scientific and brutal reification of man into a state of bestiality. Toward the end of his life, Levi developed the material of *Se questo è un uomo* with *I sommersi e i salvati* – the title of a central chapter in the previous book – where he elaborates his most poignant reflection on the mass destruction system: even after the end of Nazism, the concentration camp is always an open possibility that stays with the prisoner, in the sense that the survival of one was acquired through the death of many others, victims becoming oppressors to postpone the moment when their number was going to be called. Capitalizing on the desire to survive and other primal, instinctual needs and feelings, like power and privilege, the Nazis were able to turn Jews into executioners of their own people, creating a new being, but not a man, with an emaciated body and an annihilated soul. Levi insists on the continuous feeling of shame, guilt, and remorse that the survivor experiences, for not having been able to save others, for having sacrificed others to survive, for having surrendered to one's basest instincts, a mixture of intolerable feelings that poisons life after the concentration camp and makes one's survival almost an afterthought. *Kapò* is the story of a girl who adjusts to life in the camp and, because of the death and pain she has to inflict on others in her new position of responsibility chooses to die in an escape attempt in order not to come to terms with her complicity. Levi died, apparently committing suicide, a year after the publication of *I sommersi e i salvati*, in 1987. *Kapò* and the writings of Primo Levi share the idea that

> [h]istory is proving the Nazis right. In the end, it seems, just as the Nazis had planned, there will be no survivor left to recount because whatever mysterious evil force allowed the Lager to exist also willed that no one who was part of its trauma be left alive.[28]

The wave of war movies and of works dealing with Fascism ends with Bertolucci's *Il conformista* and *La strategia del ragno*, both made in 1970, in which the filmmaker reflects on the Fascist regime and on the Resistance not only as a public manifestations but also as personal, and therefore ambiguous, experiences.

It was a different time and a completely different project, but a regional synthesis similar to *La grande guerra* was also attempted by Bertolucci with his amazing *La via del petrolio* (1967), a documentary commissioned by the

Figures 66 to 67 Giuliano Montaldo's *Tiro al piccione* (1962) depicts Fascism as a plague infecting the Italian space (Fig. 66). After the dissolution of the Republic of Salò, the act of running is the realized metaphor of Fascist cowardice (Fig. 67).

National Agency for Hydrocarbons (Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi, or ENI). Bertolucci, son of the poet Attilio who was also the director of the ENI house organ *Il gatto selvaggio* – named after 'the wildcat,' the first oil platform devised by Colonel Drake in Pennsylvania – received a commission from the public company that already had a prominent number of journalists and politicians on its payroll. In *La via del petrolio*, documenting the route of the oil from extraction in Iran to the tankers taking it to the pipeline in Genoa and arriving in Ingolstadt, Germany, Bertolucci celebrates Italian know-how and its post-colonial industrial power, highlighting the expertise of the Italian workers coming from different parts of the country and building an industrial identity welcoming – and obliterating – regional differences. Here Bertolucci employs the same *concerto per flauto dolce sopranino* by Vivaldi that Pasolini used in *Accattone* to ossify the proletarian lifestyle. However, Bertolucci significantly departs from Pasolini's pauperist, pre-capitalistic model, and here Vivaldi's music states that ENI's globalizing endeavors are informed by a superior, classical sense of balance. The modernist use of extradiegetic, out-of-sync sound effects channels a fragmented vision of political tension and economic backwardness that somehow finds a new unity through the skilful policies of ENI in remote foreign countries. Bertolucci quickly abandons Pasolini's emphasis on the humility and simplicity of the native people to adopt a pragmatic view of the economy and conjure up an epic of Italian industry. In the wake of Rossellini's *India: Matri Bhumi* and *L'India vista da Rossellini* (1959) – and before Antonioni's *Chung-Kuo Cina* (1972) – Bertolucci brings a new perfection to the lyrical documentary, a genre later pursued by Aleksandr Sokurov. It is amazing to see how *La via del petrolio*, commissioned by a corporation for strategic purposes, reveals itself as a work of art where the barrier between documentary and fiction is demolished, sometimes turning into an essay, sometimes into a poetic journey. The film is a polyphony of presences – the workers, the local populations, the natural and industrial landscape – that Bertolucci orchestrates miraculously. In true phenomenological fashion, at

times the filmmaker seems almost unaware of the things he is filming, positioning himself outside the scene and literally letting everything speak for itself, with ideological emphasis on ENI as a factor of national cohesion emerging only occasionally. At some point, the director asks an ENI worker about his feelings toward the plant he has in custody. After persevering with questions, the filmmaker is satisfied – a jab at *Deserto Rosso*? – when the interviewee unassumingly states that he likes his job 'because there is always something to do, and one constantly learns new things.' An 'authorial documentary' if there ever was one, *La via del petrolio* truly manifests its splendor when compared to other celebratory pieces such as Pare Lorentz's Rooseveltian films: one has the perception that Bertolucci was consciously inspired by Neorealism's ethical stance on the dignity of the people, of things, and of landscape in front of the camera and is willing to accept that events will dictate to him and not vice versa.

National synthesis is also chorality redefined in terms of an ephemeral search for solidarity along family, social or regional milieux. In plenty of instances such synthesis appeared a lost cause, formalized through the impossible harmonization of North and South. In *Il bell'antonio*, based on the novel of the same name by Vitaliano Brancati, Mauro Bolognini explored the persistence of the paternalist culture through an 'actualization of the historical collective memory.'[29] It was greatly to Bolognini's credit that he understood the versatility of Marcello Mastroianni, who began his career as the 'young, good chap' of Italian cinema, usually finding his way to marriage in light-hearted comedies, and then became a cynical seducer and was on the verge of being marketed forever as a stereotypical Mediterranean womanizer. In *Il bell'Antonio* Bolognini transfered the ins and outs of Antonio's impotence from the end of the 1930s into the 1950s, dismantling the notion of love as ownership and implying that a Fascist subculture was still impregnating the mores of a nation where men were suffocating under 'the psychic and ideological modes of assimilation into proper male subjectivity.'[30] In spite of Minister Alberto Folchi's unsuccessful attempts to impede the production of the movie – producer Alfredo Bini recalled the letter received from the Christian Democrat politician, asking him to abandon such a 'disreputable' topic[31] – Bolognini skillfully commented on ill-directed Fascist exuberance[32] turning it into a pre-political condition inherent in Italian culture as a whole. Through inhospitable corridors, near ornaments evoking death and decay, the aesthetics of historical malaise and crisis accompanies Antonio's silent, 'sexual' revolt against the myths of his Sicilian father and other totemic presences. By moving the events of the literary source from the Fascist 1930s to the late 1950s, *Il bell'Antonio*, like Germi's *Divorzio all'italiana*, celebrates the mythologem of honor and virility, and the staggering, monstrous cultural hindrance between individual freedom and uncivilized forms of communal life. *Il bell'Antonio* is

an anthropological study on the persistency of archaic germs in a supposedly post-Fascist society, where farce is replaced by a sorrowful atmosphere of anguish, a Pirandellian tale of arbitrary limitations made worse by suffocating behavioral codes and rules. Similarly to *Mafioso*, *Il bell'Antonio* seems to imply that history, even in its most tragic manifestations, is in fact not capable of scratching the smooth surface of cultural laws based on an endless state of infantilism. In a cultural encoding typical of Fascism, manhood is downgraded to a perfunctory act of deflowering whose real significance is to perpetuate a primitive model of coexistence incapable of accepting other identities and inclinations. Brancati does not spare the Church, seen as a mixture of superstition and intellectual desertification, and nothing more than an excuse to receive and tout for favors.

The North-South dishomogeneity returns as national disunion, with themes such as the autonomy of the lower classes, their real options, and the ethical implications of their choices. No matter how comprehensive the vision when confronted with the task of congregating antagonist cultures and communities around a unitary idea, it was always challenging to make Sicily part of the national equation. Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* (1962) and Visconti's *Il gattopardo* (1963) both look at Sicily as a laboratory of gangrenous power practices, where neocolonial occupation perpetrated not by foreign conquerors but by the Italian central state have deprived the population of any hope for social stability and human dignity, putting the island through an exhausting sequence of conflicts and injustices. Rosi's film is a docu-inquiry into the life of bandit Salvatore Giuliano, who after embodying a modern version of a representative of *brigantaggio*, with the usual number of Robin Hood-esque folk tales attached to his deeds, became involved in the Sicilian independence project after the end of World War II and finally served as a militiaman and enforcer for right-wing landowners, conservative politicians, various mafia affiliates, and possibly also Italy's central government. Giuliano died in mysterious circumstances, and his righthand man, Gaspare Pisciotta, was poisoned in prison before he could deliver what promised to be a very controversial testimony: one of the many Italian mysteries that will never be solved until state documents will be declassified. An exhumation of Giuliano's corpse – the latest event in a trail of many twists and turns since his death in 1950, this time to check whether a body double was buried in his place – happened as late as October 2010. *Salvatore Giuliano* shows the apparently ethereal and impermanent nature of power when it is its omnipervasive action that dooms Sicily to an eternal present of subjugation and poverty. Rosi makes extensive use of deep-focus panoramic sequences intended as an ideological device, with the camera often positioned at impervious altitudes, vantage points from which rifles and machine guns seem always ready to open fire on pacific participants at political rallies or state representatives and armed forces trying to

restore order; as Mary P. Wood notes, '[s]pace and landscape structure a range of contrasts and oppositions at a symbolic level.'[33] The first scene of the epic sequence portraying the massacre of Portella della Ginestra is an alteration of the succession of events taking place that day in order to establish a dialectic separation between the forces of progress – and after the first volleys are fired, the camera will adhere to their wounded and dead bodies on the ground – and the faceless forces of reaction. Even though the rally technically did not happen because the gunmen opened fire right after the address of the local leader of the peasant union Federterra has briefly greeted the crowd,[34] Rosi inserts a political speech centered on the definition of civilization for Sicily, leaving out the most partisan measures one would expect from Communist and union leaders. It is a vibrant plea to the regional authorities – the rally took place after a very successful campaign culminated in rewarding results for the left-wing coalition 'Blocco del Popolo' on the April 20 regional elections – heroic and painful in its solemn delivery, to finally give infrastructures and education to Sicily, to facilitate economic development, and to eradicate the plague of illiteracy. Like *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* with its treatment of North and South as irredeemably alien entities, *Il gattopardo* is yet another work fueling mysticism about the island's immutable state.[35] Gianni Canova states that in *Rocco e i suoi Fratelli* Visconti is not interested in narrating 'individual stability or the insertion of the individual into a larger connective (and identitarian) tissue'; rather, he elects as main focus of his analysis 'the moment of transit'[36] implying that the uprooting from the archaic peasant culture is always a moment of loss, defeat, and dishonorable compromise. By staging the implosion of the family, Visconti 'dramatizes . . . the deconstruction of the identity and the processes of self-redefinition.'[37] The impossible transformation of Sicily seems so ingrained in the fatalistic words of the protagonist of *Il gattopardo*, the old aristocrat Prince of Salina, that the final result looks like a bizarre postcard movie on the mythologemic nature of Sicily and its eternally set place in history. While Visconti had previously addressed the shortcomings of the Risorgimento in *Senso*, illustrating the Gramscian position on the people's lack of involvement in the revolution, in *Il gattopardo* he seems to endorse a demagogic viewpoint about class adaptation and the vulgarity of the new bourgeois men that abandons the sophisticated play of historical counterweights as shown in *Senso*. As noted by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, the explicit identification with the Prince, the adoption of his point of view – succumbing to his grandiosity, as often happens Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's novel – marks a regressive stance in Visconti's lucid commentary on the force field of political and economic powers:

> The problem with the Prince is that although he is subjectively above the action and is symbolically represented as having that role, he

> remains a member of a particular class: his consciousness is class-bound consciousness, and his actions form part of the class action of the aristocracy to which he belongs.[38]

Also, Veronica Pravadelli reads *Il gattopardo* as a triumph of subjectivity and self-reflexivity by rejecting the perspective changes and the ironic digressions of the novel and explicitly identifying with the disenchanted views of the prince of Salina. Thus, *Il gattopardo* is the swansong not only of the illusion about progress and justice but also about the very idea of committed cinema and intellectual education of the public. Visconti admits that he is not interested anymore in offering the audience his 'formative credits' and recognizes how unrealistic the pretense of denying one's class of origin is. Both Rosi's and Visconti's movies seem to prophesize not a lasting diversity for Sicily but a cynical scepticism about political perspectives, implying that Italy will remain a non-nation because of its chronic incapacity and unwillingness to involve the people in its foundational moments. Fast-forward to the current situation, where Northern and Southern Leagues underscore the necessity of bypassing the central government for effective policies and a general indifference to national cohesion and historical celebrations of unity, and we see how 'Italy' is only a vague concept to be evoked for oppositional and confrontational purposes. As Ernesto Galli della Loggia writes, even the adversaries of the many autonomist Leagues and movements can only oppose the escalating fragmentation with a cold, abstract call to respect the Constitution, '[a]lmost as if no other defence of Italy can be thought of except the one we reserve for a "legally protected" asset.'[39]

The 'Southern question' is also treated in *Una questione d'onore* (1966), a minor Luigi Zampa product. *Una questione d'onore* is a comedy characterized by offensive stereotypes of the people of Sardinia, their asinine violence, and code of honor, essentially reducing them to a bunch of bloodthirsty troglodytes needing a *carabiniere* on their side to prevent them from stockpiling corpses in their absurd family feuds. When Efisio Mulas, played by Ugo Tognazzi, is unjustly accused of one such murder he has to flee and leave the island: upon his return, during which he is supposed to kill the adversary of his godfather, he prefers to spend time with his wife, getting her pregnant. But the man is assassinated anyway, so now Mulas's dilemma is being held responsible for the murder or being a cuckolded husband. After learning the name of the real culprit, he provokes him into confessing his crime, but the *carabiniere* that Mulas planned to use as witness cannot arrest the man because he is from Veneto and does not know a single word of the Sardinian language. In a revealing moment, after the man has confessed and Mulas has realized that the *carabiniere* has not understood anything, Mulas begs the man to repeat his confession, but this time in Italian because 'even if we are from Sardinia we are

all Italian, aren't we?' The linguistic fiasco and the pressure put on him by his wife's brothers force him to 'solve' the problem by killing her.

Notes

1. Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943–1991* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 81.
2. Masolino D'Amico, *La commedia all'italiana* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2008), 195.
3. Martin Clark, *Modern Italy, 1871–1995* (London: Longman, 1996), 372.
4. 'The universities were a particularly striking example, both of social conflict and of political inertia . . . [After the liberalization of entrance] Italy did not found new universities, nor did she expand her few polytechnics. She simply pushed more students into the existing universities, and provided some extra chairs . . . The policy was not a success, but the only ones that might have worked – restricting university entrance again, or raising the fees – were politically unthinkable. The universities were left to fester.' Martin Clark, *Modern Italy*, 374–5.
5. Angela Bianca Saponari, *Il rifiuto dell'uomo nel cinema di Marco Ferreri* (Bari: Progedit, 2008), 25. The scholar entitled the chapter on *Marcia nuziale* 'The artificial couple.'
6. In his relation to the profilmic Antonioni has maintained a position that in many aspects echoes Rossellini's method: See the interview with André S. Labarthe 'Entretien avec Michelangelo Antonioni,' *Cahiers du cinéma* 112, Fall 1960 and the Preface to Michelangelo Antonioni, *Sei film* (Turin: Einaudi, 1964).
7. Marcia Landy, *Italian Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 296.
8. Ibid. 296.
9. Emiliano Morreale, *Cinema d'autore degli anni Sessanta* (Milan: Il Castoro, 2011), 32.
10. Gilles Deleuze, 'One Less Manifesto,' in Timothy Murray (ed.), *Mimesis, Masochism, and Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 240.
11. Paola Boioli, *Bene: Il cinema della dépense* (Alessandria: Falsopiano, 2011), 79.
12. Flavio Vergerio, '*I pugni in tasca*,' in Luisa Ceretto and Giancarlo Zappoli (ed.), *Le forme della ribellione: Il cinema di Marco Bellocchio* (Turin: Lindau, 2004), 48.
13. Arnold L. Farr, *Critical Theory and Democratic Vision: Herbert Marcuse and Recent Liberation Philosophers* (Lanham: Lexington, 2009), 80.
14. Viola Brisolin, *Power and Subjectivity in the Late Work of Roland Barthes and Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), 146.
15. According to Vittorio Prina, the invocation of the sacred starts from camera movements, marking the ground where the film is shot with a trajectory drawing a cross: 'Pasolini marks the territory, the places and the buildings with a cross-like sign similar to the very foundation of the place itself by tracing something like a cardus and a decumanus.' Vittorio Prina, *Pier Paolo Pasolini. Teorema. I luoghi: paesaggio e architettura* (Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli, 2010), 20.
16. Simona Bondavalli, 'Lost in the pig house: Vision and consumption in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Porcile*,' *Italica*, Vol. 87, No. 3, Autumn 2010, 423.
17. Prina insists on the religious symbology of dust, admonishing on the finite nature of man and his inconclusive efforts. The walk through deserted areas before a consolatory meeting on a beach with all the people that have entered one's life returns in Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life* (2011). Those scenes seem to favor

a Heideggerian interpretation of the movie, specifically through the concept of destiny as pure event marking one's life, and the encounter with others as access to being. Man gains knowledge of the world through theoretical deduction, already structured a priori, thus instituting a short circuit between thought and being.

18. Marcello Gigante, 'Edipo uomo qualunque?' in Umberto Todini (ed.), *Pasolini e l'antico: I doni della ragione* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1995), 72.
19. Stephen Snyder, *Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), 90.
20. Josef Rauscher, 'Pasolinis mytho-mystische Realitätsversessenheit,' in Thomas Koebner and Irmbert Schenk (ed.), *Das goldene Zeitalter des italienischen Films* (München: text + kritik, 2008), 242.
21. Luciano Canfora, *La natura del potere* (Bari: Laterza, 2009), 79.
22. Gianni Borgna in the Preface to *Totò partenopeo e parte napoletano* (Venice: Marsilio, 1998).
23. Tinto Brass provided a different, anarchic and libertarian take on the revolutions of the twentieth century with the montage film *Ça ira – Il fiume della rivolta* in 1964.
24. Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1987), 47.
25. Claretta Tonetti, *Luchino Visconti* (Boston: Twayne, 1983), 68.
26. Luciano Spadoni, assistant of set decorator Gianni Polidori, declared that Loy and the crew wanted 'to give the idea that it was a documentary being shot during the four days of Naples' in Antonella Licata and Elisa Mariani Travi, *La città e il cinema* (Bari: Dedalo, 1993), 94.
27. Lorenzo Pellizzari, 'Un regista fattapposta,' in Antioco Floris and Paola Ugo (ed.), *Nanni Loy: Un regista fattapposta* (Cagliari: CUEC, 1996), 25. Pellizzari also notes the problematicity of the Neorealist label given to *Le quattro giornate di Napoli*, and how the official press release sold the movie as the product of nonprofessional actors when in fact it had a stellar international cast.
28. Nicholas Patruno, *Understanding Primo Levi* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 141.
29. Mauro Bolognini in Lino Micciché (ed.), *Il bell'Antonio di Mauro Bolognini: Dal romanzo al film (*Associazione Philip Morris Progetto Cinema; Centro Sperimentale Di Cinematografia Cineteca Nazionale; Compass Film; Turin: Lindau, 1996), 16.
30. Jacqueline Reich, *Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni, Masculinity, and Italian Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 5.
31. The word used by Bini is 'disdicevole' in the article by Giovanna Grassi, '*Il bell' Antonio* si toglie 37 anni,' *Corriere della Sera*, January 28, 1997, 30.
32. The Benito Mussolini in Marco Bellocchio's *Vincere* (2009) is also portrayed as a charismatic anti-hero whose messianic vitalism is a tragically wrong answer to the problems posed by geopolitical and historical challenges.
33. Mary P. Wood, *Italian Cinema* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 197.
34. A detailed account of the Portella della Ginestra massacre is in Francesco Petrotta (ed.), *Girolamo Li Causi, Portella della Ginestra: La ricerca della verità* (Rome: Ediesse, 2007).
35. For a comparative analysis between *Il gattopardo* and *Salvatore Giuliano*, see Elizabeth Leake, 'Prototypes of the Mafia: Luchino Visconti's *The Leopard*,' in Dana Renga (ed.), *Mafia Movies: A Reader* (University of Toronto Press, 2011), 234–42.
36. Gianni Canova, 'Visconti e le aporie anestetiche della modernità,' in Veronica Pravadelli (ed.), *Il cinema di Luchino Visconti* (Venice: Marsilio, 2000), 176.

37. Ibid. 177.
38. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *Luchino Visconti* (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 92.
39. Ernesto Galli della Loggia, 'Noi italiani senza memoria: I 150 anni dell'Unità e il vuoto d'idee,' *Corriere della Sera*, July 20, 2009.

7. BEHAVIORAL CODES AND SEXUAL MORES

After Matarazzo: Lattuada, Cottafavi, Soldati, De Santis, and . . . Matarazzo

Through the entire arc of the 1950s, Raffaello Matarazzo – together with other filmmakers like Giorgio Walter Chili, Guido Brignone, Mario Costa – illustrated the Catholic essence of Italian femininity in a vast number of works. Titles like *Catene* (1949), *Tormento* (1950), *L'angelo bianco* (1955), *I figli di nessuno* (1952), *Chi è senza peccato* . . . (1952) and others can all be read through a Mulveyan canon of taming and reduction of the female to domestic captivity, diegetically resolving episodes of independence and conflict leading to marriage, passive home confinement, and powerless positions inscribed 'in the patriarchal context of normative heterosexuality and compulsory motherhood.'[1] Even in the movie that allegedly 'stains' his résumé, *La nave delle donne maledette* (1953) – or, as it was rather called, 'la nave delle donne di Ponti' because of the casting of the producer's former, current and prospective lovers – where the revolt of a group of female prisoners on a cargo boat is rendered with voyeuristic tones and erotic overcharge, at the end a divine punishment sorts out the women's foolish ambitions inexorably, sinking the ship and all its sinful passengers. Also, in *Guai ai vinti* (1955), a dark and disturbing movie about two Italian women raped by soldiers of the Austrian army during World War I, Clara, who chose not to have an abortion, meets a tragic death that seems to be there purely for the purpose of arousing indignation in the audience, and is the most convenient way for them to find a sense of collective

peace and unity. The only dissonances in Matarazzo's work seem to come from *La risaia* (1956), a movie about a landowner who, after recognizing his natural daughter Elena in one of the rice workers, takes the blame for the death of the stepson who was trying to rape Elena and was killed by Elena's fiancée. The peasant landscape of the ricefields is glorified by the lush, expressionist tones of Eastmancolor, but there are also hints of an autonomous life outside one's 'natural' situation. In *La risaia*, the romantic hero obtains a promising job as a sales representative that seems to instantly sweep away all the 'sinful' events taking place in the female protagonist's family, literally cleansing the previous violence, 'illegitimate' births, and melodramatic material with an entry into mature capitalism. Furthermore, at the end the arrest of the landowner breaks the chain of sexual tyranny and confirms the maturity of Elena, who needs no family around her for training in patriarchal practices. Matarazzo portrayed the deceptive stability of Italian families in a way that was not too different from Neorealism and pink Neorealism, which 'created little discursive space for the specific experience of women'[2] outside the Catholic protocol. However, by the early 1950s unconventional portraits of women were already forcing the boundaries of 'safe' genres such as comedy and melodrama. Even works like Alberto Lattuada's *La spiaggia* (1953) – the story of a prostitute who, together with her young daughter, has to endure the hypocritical hostility of people around her until an old gentleman befriends her – and Mario Soldati's *La provinciale* (1952) and *La donna del fiume* (1954) introduced women whose subjectivity could not be securely contained in the usual parameters of popular literature: women who fight proudly to be protagonist of their own lives and to escape the captive roles others want to force on them. Mario Soldati was an eclectic director in the good sense of the word: not a simple craftsman of B-movies, but a theoretician capable of 'poaching' from various schools to make personal works that often are exploded versions of more or less innocuous genres. If the genre pastiche and the saturated colors of *La donna del fiume* make for a memorable, often ironic bizarro 'remake' of *Riso amaro*, already in 1939 with *Dora Nelson* Soldati had elegantly deconstructed the white-telephone comedies with a metacinematic critique.

Antonio Pietrangeli's *Il sole negli occhi* was made in 1953, the crucial year after the neorealist swansong of *Umberto D*. *Il sole negli occhi* is the story of Celestina, a young peasant girl going to Rome and working as a maid. Courted by an insipid cop, she chooses independence and decides to keep the baby she's about to have, after a troubled affair with a tinsmith. The film inaugurates the gallery of Pietrangeli's women, proud and stubborn creatures determined to adhere to their own ethical conduct, regardless of the pressure they receive from the outside. With *Un marito per Anna Zaccheo* (1953), Giuseppe De Santis continued his research into female characters, who, in their struggle for survival in a patriarchal society, form a reactive consciousness resulting in the

creation of an identity that transcends the roles of mother, wife, and sexual object. As previously seen, De Santis does not belong to the 'mainstream' Neorealism that will subsequently inspire the various new waves, but he would push his analysis of popular culture to abstract, postmodern heights. He is not a manipulator of time but the pursuer of a 'national cinema for the masses – a cinema that could both entertain and shape a progressive social consciousness,'[3] and to achieve this goal he combines different 'low' genres such as melodrama and comedy to make the final product as accessible as possible. In spite of this problematic agenda, De Santis can within the same narrative segment seamlessly switch from purely 'mechanical' takes facilitating the narrative to stratified, allegorical commentaries. For example, in this picture, De Santis uses basic devices of slapstick comedy to create the encounter between the character of Anna and that of a sailor on a beach where Anna is bathing naked, thus establishing their love story as the main thread of the movie, only to move a few moments later to the couple watching a *sceneggiata napoletana* in a theater, with Anna trustingly looking for good omens in the light of her desire to get married and thereby appropriating external models of behavior that relegate her to home confinement. Throughout the entire movie, De Santis courageously offered the beauty and sexual desirability of his lead actress, Silvana Pampanini, to the male gaze in order to expose its debasing value. Silvana Pampanini appeared also in Luigi Comencini's *La tratta delle bianche* (1952), a solid *noir* dealing with prostitution and human slavery, but far more interesting is Comencini's previous movie, *Persiane chiuse* (1951), in which a woman played by Eleonora Rossi Drago is desperately searching for her sister, has been kicked out of the paternal home because of an 'illicit' relationship and is now being exploited by a sinister pimp. With his usual elegance, Comencini in *Persiane chiuse* balances a collision between history – the poverty and desperation of the postwar years, the backwardness of family values – and film philosophy with a quasi-metaphysical commentary on the fragility of women, not because of intrinsic weaknesses but because of the rapacious and greedy behavior of men.

In continuity with the 'impurity' of Neorealism, new auteurs took up its congeries of different tones and genres, configuring their projects as unconventional explorations of comedy, drama, tragedy, even historical episodes, all interwoven in articulations that tend to set aside the collective experience – but never turning multitudes into masses with class missions[4] – to focus on individual stories. It is during this time of evolution in film practices that women in Italian cinema become the privileged interface for the analysis of contemporary issues. The cineaste who first showed women actively pursuing discontinuity from family-oriented behaviors before others opened up the national tradition to different models in the 1960s was Vittorio Cottafavi. Starting with Cottafavi, women were finally disengaged from Catholic impersonations

of domestic beatitude or sinful carnality inevitably leading to patriarchally orchestrated forms of punishment. Famously lauded by Truffaut – in two separate instances, in *Arts* and *Cahiers du cinéma* – for *Traviata '53* (1953) and his rendition of Alexandre Dumas' *La dame aux camelias* in contemporary Turin, Vittorio Cottafavi is a critical figure in the limbo years between the heroic phase of Neorealism and the mature modernist works of the 1960s. *Traviata '53* belongs to a group of five movies on the female condition in postwar Italy: The other four are *Una donna ha ucciso* (1952), *Nel gorgo del peccato* (1954), *Una donna libera* (1954), and *In amore si pecca in due* (1954). In spite of being classified as melodramas, these films feature Cottafavi's theoretical approach, which echoes the Neorealist debate on the creation of or reconnection to a recognizable Italian tradition, as well as Bazin's emphasis on a new concept of cinematic suture: a spatial and diegetic unity that confers a realist status to the actor and the background against which he is juxtaposed. Cottafavi writes:

> As a concurrent goal the film wanted to criticize the society of the time: we were before the boom but everybody was already parading wealth. I wanted to paint a truly realistic portrait, I could say a verist one because of the references to our literary tradition, not trying to deceive but putting in the representation that participation, that mercy which has always been not the smallest goal of good movies . . . It is the bloody mentality that compels us Italian people to create political discourses and always take them too seriously. Everybody was so into such discourses that nobody noticed the long takes of *Traviata 53*. For me, among other things, it wasn't a way to avoid intervening artificially in the characters but it was just the pursuit of an image continuity . . . I never considered the long take attractive in itself, but it's like when we look at a painting, we observe all that is contained by the frame and then we say 'too bad it doesn't continue!' The long take is the continuation of a painting that makes its discourse exceed the frame. We often talked about that with Antonioni, he also had the sense of the long take, which naturally we did not call as such.[5]

In Truffaut's words, *Traviata '53* was worthy of being mentioned together with *Cronaca di un amore*, but Cottafavi's constellation of illustrious associates does not stop with Antonioni, as Gianni Rondolino writes about *Una donna ha ucciso*:

> The film's realistic and 'Zavattinian' side is reinforced by the fact that this woman actually appears in the opening and the ending, almost like a frame around the story of the murder she committed and a moral analysis of it . . . Within this moralistic and somewhat educational framework,

> the film unravels like a serial story, with a highly realistic yet melodramatic structure. Perhaps it was this unusual dramaturgical structure that explains why audiences were puzzled and why the film was not well received . . . The importance of *Una donna ha ucciso* is that it was the first work of this pentalogy about women in contemporary society . . . Women's issues and relationship problems in general are presented in a spiritual, moralistic yet anti-traditional perspective, offering a complex and in some ways provocative point of view; they are the underpinnings of a larger discourse about interpersonal relationships in a society dominated by selfishness, abuse of power, psychological violence, and moral and cultural conditioning. Cottafavi used the melodrama, the serial story, the 'comic strip' story, the popular drama – always checked by a sensitivity to style and an effort to represent stories, characters, settings and facts with the right dramatic proportions, within the limits of what was artistically and technically possible – in an attempt to reach a larger audience . . . and to experiment with a vast range of expressive forms of film as an art for the masses, following in the footsteps of the great popular fiction of the 1800s and Italian melodrama, from Rossini to Puccini.[6]

The story of a Neapolitan woman who does not hesitate to kill the man with whom she is in love, a British officer who does not want to renounce his freedom, *Una donna ha ucciso* not only is outstanding when dealing with the dramatic material but also with memorable sequences where Anna, the female protagonist, loses her grip on reality, as in a superb passage where she aimlessly drifts through streets and people in Rome, under the rain, exemplifying Cottafavi's belief that the camera can extract and return to the audience raw feelings from bodies and faces better than the human eye. Similar signature shots are also present in *Una donna libera* and in *Traviata '53*, with posters of the Carnevale di Viareggio achieving an effect similar to the giant vermouth bottles of Antonioni's *Cronaca di un amore*.

The most notable moments of the pentalogy are probably related to this belief in the provocative potential of the apparatus and its capability of distilling an irreducible truth or, as Deleuze would put it, the intolerable experience of the limit without a real narrative climax. One may also recognize Rossellini's influence, his education to a patient vision without the ethical blackmail of fulfilled expectations and cheap effects, an approach that would later be extremized by Béla Tarr. Cottafavi was convinced that it was time to recover the use of silence as a means to gain access to deeper layers of the soul and to the interior world of the characters: His most subdued treatments of psychological turmoils are not far from Michelangelo Antonioni's *Le amiche* (1955). Loosely based on a short story by Cesare Pavese, *Le amiche* has four women as main protagonists. At the end of a long sequence of betrayals, envy,

Figures 68 and 69 Vittorio Cottafavi's *Una donna ha ucciso* (1952, top, Fig. 68) and *Una donna libera* (1954, Fig. 69) as well as the other films of his 'pentalogy,' are rich with moments where women are caught against indifferent landscapes, anticipating Antonioni's disconnection between characters and nature.

and cold rivalries one of them commits suicide and those who had tried to distance themselves from the bourgeois milieu of their friendship are incapable of doing anything other than returning to that 'nest' of hatred, fear, and insecurities. Articulated as a 'laic phenomenology of existential and moral dissolution,'[7] the psychological *mise en abyme* of the four women is pursued through the absence of reverse shots, nailing them to their environment – where they are unable to redeem their failure – and to the men they accompanied in taking responsibility for the pain they inflict on each other.

After Cottafavi, women are admitted to different spaces in Italian cinema: they enjoy a new dimension of autonomy and agency in Pietrangeli and Bertolucci; they are used as a strong symbolic presence to gain access to the

country's cultural backwardness in Ferreri; they are granted a privileged point of view in the disgregation of subjectivity in Antonioni; and after *La dolce vita* they become a prismatic aggregate of male neuroses in Fellini, like a parade of everted obsessions put on display. Both in *8½* and *Giuletta degli spiriti*, Fellini ambiguously celebrated the liberation of the woman. The two movies showcase the feminine apparition as something potentially redeeming but factually illusory, an epistemological ghost where the sacrality of the epiphanic encounter is sardonically replaced by its fleeting reflection:

> Whereas Fellini in *La dolce vita* aims to survive the apocalypse of modernity by presenting his images as the last, viable modernist signifiers, he no longer cultivates any illusions about the efficacy of his own art in *8 & ½* . . . After an archetypical modernist convalescence at a pseudo-Thomas-Mann-style sanitarium, the protagonist Guido Anselmi embarks on a search for enlightenment via an encounter with a beautiful girl in white whom he has glimpsed at the spa. Unlike *La dolce vita*, though, *8 & ½* uses its familiar quest narrative in an evidently parodic mode and concedes without reservation the untimeliness of Guido's dream of purity.[8]

Peter Bondanella already noted that, in *8½*'s famous harem scene, where all of Guido's women convene to provide a safe and protective uterus-like haven, 'Guido's sexist, wish-fulfillment fantasies are gently but effectively ridiculed.'[9] By emotionally crippling his wife into a quasi-robot whose function is to clean, wash, and (pre)serve, and by confining the 'old' dancer Jacqueline in a limbo where she will be content with just memories, Fellini casts a disquieting shadow on Guido's state of regression. Moreover, by entrusting to the flight attendant Nadine a significant role in pushing forward the nightmarish narrative of the harem, Fellini depicts a man whose soul seems to be suspended and selfhood negated, where all spiritual solicitations must come from the outside because he is as incapable of directing his emotions as we are of exercising control on ourselves during a flight. *Giulietta degli spiriti* is less interesting, and quite the opposite of a 'remarkable argument for woman's liberation in a country where masculine values have traditionally dominated thinking on a woman's role in society.'[10] By casting Sylva Koscina and Caterina Boratto, respectively, as Giulietta's sister and mother, Fellini claims the 'natural' foundation of male's desire, ultimately leading to betrayal and sexual dissatisfaction with one's woman. Conveniently providing a Catholic upbringing for Giulietta, Fellini nails her even more desperately to the angel/whore conundrum: No liberation seems possible for a woman not as gorgeous as Koscina or Boratto, who in turn are 'natural' whores precisely because of their looks. *Giulietta degli spiriti* comes across as preposterous because, if 'the image of

woman in the movies is not an authentic representation of women's reality but, instead, a projection of male sexual fantasies,'[11] the masturbatory traits attributed to Boratto and Koscina will erase Masina's presence from the film. Giulietta's disengaging movement toward redemption is aborted because it is informed with cultural codes pinning her as a diminutive figure unfit for pleasure. As hard as she tries to individuate herself through negative encounters, at the end of the movie 'Juliet is still a compendium of cultural symbols.'[12]

Clairvoyant Women, Emasculated Men: Revisiting Gender Roles During the Boom

While society was restructuring under the thrust of capitalist accumulation, new roles were available for women to expand their experiences in every 'partition' of their lives: at work, in romantic encounters, and while embarking in difficult journeys for the recognition of their independence. Such transformations occurred while Italian society was still extremely traditionalist and governed by values 'circulated' by a grotesquely backward masculine culture, as shown in Mauro Bolognini's *Il bell'Antonio*. Eager to break free from the models imposed on them by masculine power, women are not afraid to seize independence, power, and sexual pleasure disengaged from archaic practices, sometimes, as in Silvio Siano's *La donnaccia* (1964), evoking such a radical change that it will simply destroy the current Italy. When former prostitute Mariarosa returns to her peasant village, she causes a stir among local males and eventually finds a young man who wants to marry her: Hampered by the villagers trying to prevent the union, the two will be able to get married only when the entire male population emigrates toward Switzerland.

The female body presided over the triumph of Italy's national cinema through 'pre-existing' divas anointed by Neorealism like Anna Magnani and Silvana Mangano or new actresses – such as Claudia Cardinale, Monica Vitti, Elsa Martinelli, and Stefania Sandrelli – whose versatile dynamism could easily harmonize with the new lifestyles generated by new freedoms. In her analysis of *Anna* – starring Anna Magnani – and *La strega bruciata viva* – starring Silvana Mangano – two episodes from the portmanteau films *Siamo donne* (1953) and *Le streghe* (1967) respectively, Marcus noted the irreconcilable difference between an artisanal *divismo* of the people, that of Magnani's, and the heavily manufactured *divismo* of Mangano. In *La strega bruciata viva*, Mangano plays a famous actress on the verge of a nervous breakdown, despotically maneuvred by an agent-husband, and whose unborn baby is going to be aseptically 'removed' from her body on his orders because it is incompatible with her career. This very act of separation, metonymically confirmed by the violent abduction of the diva from the mountain chalet where she is vainly looking for a fragment of peace, is linked by Marcus to the new industrial

pressure of packaging a product instead of creating a revolutionary cultural artifact as was the case with the Neorealist experience:

> As the artisanal divismo of the immediate postwar period gave way to its industrialized successor in the Italy of 'Il Boom,' something vital and human was lost – the impulse to self-renewal and rebirth allegorized by the pregnancy that Gloria will not be allowed to bring to term . . . The end of *La strega bruciata viva* reflects the unease of the filmmaker anxious to maintain the artisanal integrity of his own work, yet caught up in the mechanisms of the industry on which he depends. While critical of the violence visited upon the body of the diva by the cinematic apparatus, Visconti's camera cannot help but exploit that appeal, and the intensely cynical ending of the film is also a wonderfully entertaining piece of filmic spectacle.[13]

Neorealism claims its symbolic revenge with the last episode, *Una sera come le altre*, directed by Vittorio De Sica with the loyal Zavattini on board as the scriptwriter. Here, Mangano is a bored wife fantasizing about receiving sexual attention from comic book heroes and making love in a stadium in front of thousands of possessed fans, while her dull man is left at home taking care of children. The choice of the actor for the drowsy husband, whose monotonous voice sends Mangano to sleep and whose tedious workplace reports finally provoke the sensual fantasies could seem puzzling at first: It is in fact a young Clint Eastwood, fresh from the Sergio Leone western trilogy, who admirably subjects himself to the unnerving portrait of a 'hollow man' annihilated by an emasculating routine. With deliberate wickedness, Zavattini exploits the cultural clichés of Americanization and of the new cinema of genres, ridiculing Eastwood as the shooting cowboy whose ejaculation of bullets cannot stop the human river of people rushing to admire his wife's erotic prowess. In 1967, it felt like a nostalgic hymn to the veterans of Neorealism who did not fall on that glorious battlefield and, like Mangano, could seamlessly thrive also in an era of industrial – and national – cinema. Along with Alberto Sordi, Mangano was also the protagonist of each of the five episodes of *La mia signora* (1964), which, although not unforgettable, confirm that Mangano's convincing eclecticism could work as a viable, Italian way to a mature showbiz industry. In *Eritrea*, she plays a prostitute 'rented' to be a wife by an engineer (Sordi) who plans to use her as sexual bait in order to secure a lucrative contract. Possibly more interesting than the predictable unfolding of the quasi-*pochade* is the ending of the episode, where Mangano the prostitute has now turned into the sophisticated wife of an old prince. The moment in which Sordi is introduced to her and pretends he has never seen her before is a clear statement about a regeneration that does not need contrite repenting and breaks with the melo-

Figure 70 His life-long dream retrieved: Alberto Sordi and Silvana Mangano from *La mia signora* (1964).

dramatic tradition of Catholic inspiration. Mangano also gets the last laugh in the final episode, *L'automobile*, centered on a man (Sordi again) whose wife lets his beloved Jaguar get stolen during a meeting with a young lover. Worn out, badly distraught about the loss of his only object of exclusive affection, he deals with the news of the wife's infidelity as just another detail of interest in the reconstruction of the theft, as an instrument for the retrieval of the car. After the Jaguar is returned to her husband, Mangano demonstrates low tolerance for being objectified – not even as the main object – and spitefully slaps Sordi for revenge.

Mangano is also in *La terra vista dalla luna*, another episode from the anthology *Le streghe*. *La terra vista dalla luna* was directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini and makes a fantastic use of Totò, his comic persona 'depurated' from all narrative pretexts and transformed into a purely clown-like mask, an unstoppable force extracting the pain and the absurdity from every encounter, thanks to his inquisitive nature. Similar to the action in *Uccellacci e uccellini*, Totò and his son, played by Ninetto Davoli wander the outskirts of Rome, this time in search of a new wife for the head of the household. They eventually find one in the deaf Assurdina, who seems to have supernatural powers when she prodigiously reorganizes the decrepit shack where Totò and Ninetto live. Dissatisfied with their old shanty, they decide to stage Assurdina's fake suicide at the Colosseum to get the money for a better dwelling. But Assurdina slips on a banana peel carelessly thrown by tourists and dies for real, only to return to the shack as a ghost, carrying on with her old life as a housewife like nothing happened. Her death is unimportant when compared to the chores she has to take care of. By commenting on the tragic hilarity the characters are pervaded with when seeing their hovel all tidied up, Pasolini stresses the 'magical, reconstructive power'[14] of his humble people, at the same time exposing the atavic desire man has for a submissive, reified woman, and condemning the reckless

actions of the tourists, seen as a mass phenomenon whose journeys abroad and thirst for photographic documentation is an empty and destructive ritual.

Catherine Spaak was one of the first female stars exhibited to the public for her potential as a noncastrating sexual heroine. In *Tre notti d'amore* (1964), a portmanteau comedy with episodes directed by Comencini, Franco Rossi, and Castellani, Spaak interpellates the audience from the opening titles onward by mimicking frivolous gestures among the multicolored panels in Piero Gherardi's stylized outfits. An unruly woman of sorts, she literally embodies men's death drive in the first episode, causing the death of all of her admirers; she is then erased in the second episode according to a Freudian interpretation as she morphs from uncontrolled provider of easy sex into a custodian of the Father Law; in the third episode, she ambiguously shifts between the two paradigms of liberated woman and obedient wife. Considered an innocuous attempt to inscribe changes on the female body, *Tre notti d'amore* provides the mildly disruptive movement of some Italian comedies: cynical and sarcastic in addressing inconsistencies and backward traditions, and still insisting on a culturally reassuring frame. Spaak often starred as a teenager, apparently carefree but mature beyond her age, choosing older men as amorous partners and not afraid of using her body for immediate advantages. After her fundamental role in *I dolci inganni*, in Florestano Vancini's *La calda vita* (1964), based on the novel by Pier Antonio Quarantotti Gambini, she played a young girl who is sought after by two friends but rejects them in favor of an adult man and an independent life. Spaak was also irresistible in Antonio Pietrangeli's *La parmigiana*, where she scorns aspiring husbands and pitiful lovers, opting for an independent life that is also an admirable show of strength. Treated by Pietrangeli as a bittersweet comedy that exposes the misery of a provincial town and its inhabitants, *La parmigiana* is in fact a work that hides under apparently relieving touches the scandalous portrait of a girl who is not afraid of leaving the family, jeeringly mocking the men around her and their obtuse mentality, literally creating her space of agency against the claims of the masculine world. Spaak vibrates with new freedom, raw and indomitable; she epitomizes the choice of many Italian directors of the time to read the 'crisis' through a woman's eyes and to grant her a divining power of interpretation, an advanced awareness in deciphering the world and its accidental flux of events and opportunities. After *La parmigiana*, Pietrangeli established, with the Adriana of *Io la conoscevo bene,* a point of no return in the new representation of the feminine: not capricious but impenetrable, elusive, unavailable to an encounter.

A testament to the importance of the woman and her intrinsic superiority over man is in Nanni Loy's *Il padre di famiglia* (1967), a picture that establishes a close relationship between the dissolution of a family, the explosion of the economic boom, and the fading of collective dreams of justice. By

Figure 71 In Antonio Pietrangeli's *La parmigiana* (1963), Catherine Spaak defiantly scoffs at the notion of life-long commitment proposed by the *carabiniere* played by Lando Buzzanca. Her individual ethos towers over the man and is as irreducible as the Catholic doctrine symbolized by the church in the background.

Loy's admission, one of the goals of this austere and tense work was to show how the real father of the family was the woman. One the film's most intense moments – the wife, played by Leslie Caron, disconsolately tells her husband (Nino Manfredi), 'I miss being pregnant: If I'm not pregnant, what am I good for?' – sounds like a resigned commentary on the general condition of women and a perpetuation of patriarchal effacement into traditional roles.

After starring in Dino Risi's *Una vita difficile* (1961) as a typical middle-class Italian man struggling to adjust his ideals to the value that commodities have for his wife, equating his incapacity to be a capable breadwinner with a symbolic castration, Alberto Sordi perfected the character of the emasculated, unsuccessful provider in Elio Petri's *Il maestro di Vigevano* (1963). In Risi's film, Sordi is a journalist who, after briefly flirting with the idea of serving as a mercenary writer for a vulgar industrialist, defiantly reembraces a coherent stance standing for his uncompromising ideals, at the same time renouncing the material gratification his family is asking him to obtain. The greatness of *Una vita difficile* lays in its exemplary tone, in its allegorical personification of virtues and moral sins, a pilgrim's progress for the years of the economic boom. Sordi's character is recognizable politically, like Enrico Maria Salerno in *Le stagioni del nostro amore*, and his trajectory is a cautionary tale about the misery and splendor of new pressures derived from the reification of social, romantic, and family relations. *Il maestro di Vigevano* is even more powerful because it puts such reification in direct relationship with the declining role of school and education. In Petri's work, Sordi plays a schoolteacher whose wife is determined to climb the social ladder by working for the footwear production sector, even if that means turning their apartment into a workshop and making her husband quit his teaching job.[15] In *Il maestro di Vigevano*, based on the eponymous Lucio Mastronardi novel, Sordi is shunted from one

unappealing option to the other without ever finding solace: His job at the school looks like a menial occupation, with mediocre colleagues and a tyrannical principal; he apparently falls on his feet when he finally gives in at his wife's insistence, resigns, and then starts working in their apartment-turned-shoe-workshop, only to be the author of his own undoing when he foolishly admits the company's fiscal evasion to one of his former colleagues, who is also a tax agent in disguise. Sordi's schoolteacher is caught in a contradictory position of displacement: he is subject to frequent humiliations from the principal, but he seems incapable of standing up for his own dignity, and his teaching methodology seems at times of authoritarian if not fascist inspiration, yet he reverts to fearful meekness when confronting his superiors or the sons of affluent citizens. Emasculated by his wife's refusal to have sexual intercourse with him, Sordi finds the dignity and mission of his teaching duties dubious at best, and finally complies with her middle-class aspirations. Sordi's strong-willed wife, masterfully played by British actress Claire Bloom and dubbed with a Milanese accent by Giovanna Ralli, is in the same mould as other successful women with jobs and disposable income portrayed in *Il successo*, *Il giovedì* (1963) and *Il sorpasso*, rich with 'independence and poise in sharp contrast to melodramatic femininity.'[16] When evaluating the meaning of the sexual underpinnings, the main thread seems to be a direct relationship between breadwinning skills and sexual activity, as observed in the voracious figure of the male entrepreneur presented with traits one could find in a sexual predator. The emasculation of the male when placed in a financially subaltern position with regards to the female is also in Mario Missiroli's *La bella di Lodi*, but orchestrated as a strategy conducive to sexual gratification. If the imbalance is tragic in *Il maestro di Vigevano*, dramatic in *Il successo*, and mostly ironic in Nanni Loy's *Il marito*, *La bella di Lodi* satirizes the relationship between the entrepreneur Roberta, coming from a high bourgeois family of industrialists, and the poor mechanic Franco through his regressive behavior, by virtue of which he often hurts, scratches, or burns himself in Roberta's presence, with childlike whining – and more sex – ensuing. One can recognize in the satire the wit of Alberto Arbasino who, after dismissing the psychoanalytical sophistication of Italy's new bourgeoise class as depicted in the films of Antonioni, in *La bella di Lodi* treated the characters with benevolence and empathy.

The cultural earthquake – women abandoning their position of subalternity – was significantly facilitated and accompanied by the film industry. According to Günsberg, Hunt, and others, the rise of genre cinema during the 1960s was predicated on the necessity of containing the anxiety caused by major changes in the sexual dynamic. Hunt, in particular, suggested that the passage from an early gothic to a later *giallo* phase can be assimilated to a trajectory taking male sexuality from pre-oedipal masochism to oedipal sadism. Mario Bava's *La frusta e il corpo* (1963) epitomizes the passage between these two periods,

depicting a relationship where erotic satisfaction can be reached only through sadomasochistic intercourse. Christopher Lee plays Kurt Menliff, a spiteful, sadistic, yet charismatic nobleman who returns to the family castle after being banished by his family for his brutal ways. He resumes a relationship with Nevenka, now married to his brother Christian. Nevenka quickly succumbs to Kurt's ominous charm; he repeatedly slashes her with a horse whip, excitedly saying 'you have not changed . . . you always liked violence.' After Kurt is stabbed and then buried, the old patriarch of the family is inexplicably found dead with the same wound found on Kurt's neck, and Nevenka seem to descend into madness as she hears the voice of Kurt and the cracks of the horse whip echo in the corridors of the castle. In the end, Nevenka commits suicide, stabbing herself as she had previously done with Kurt and his father. Bava convincingly portrays Nevenka as a narcissist whose subjectivity is divided, a woman engrossed in mysterious thoughts who has identified the deeper part of her individuality with the wicked Kurt. After literally trying to domesticate her just like any other wild animal, Bava resorts to the usual mechanism of death to bring closure. It is also noteworthy that the director creates an antagonistic situation between Nevenka and Christian's real love Katia, paving the way for a resolution whereby the wrong wife constantly demanding sex is replaced by a sexually nondescript woman-in-waiting. *La frusta e il corpo* polishes to perfection the sexually charged motifs of early horror films: dark, menacing passageways replicating the fear for what lies behind the threshold of the womb, decaying locales seen as a reflection of 'uncontrolled' feminine sexual desire; characters who literally jump among lavish pools of light in a quest to find, tame, and conquer the threatening ways of the libido. The reduction to silence of a problematic female character destabilizing a given order with her desire reminds one very much of Hitchcock: By internalizing a demeaning mechanism of mutilation – the whip that skins Nevenka – Bava paves the way for Dario Argento's razors. Like his teacher Sergio Leone, Argento in turn will insist on details and limbs, fragmenting the unity of the person and therefore appropriating the Marquis De Sade's 'mechanical' principle of the extraction of pleasure from parts of the other's body.

Bava's craftsmanship and artistry have been widely celebrated, but his style is always functional to the ethical economy of the picture: The destructured plots, false crescendo, empty climaxes and pauses, and peripheral characters turning into protagonists or the opposite are the pivots of a mature modernist approach, a subjective gaze without a subject. Nikolaj Gogol's liminal events, specularity of life and death, and arbitrary narrative articulations are rendered in *La maschera del demonio* (1960), a film that exemplifies the ambiguity of the woman, literally seen as a witch whose sexual drive makes eros and death coexist, collide, and ultimately coincide. But the destabilizing nature of autonomous female desire transcends the horror genre. Works like Damiano

Damiani's *La strega in amore* (1966), a horror-fantasy piece aspiring to 'art movie' status, or Fernando Di Leo's *Il boss* (1972), an action/crime flick about mafia clans in Sicily, showcase the pernicious nature of the patriarchal law of 'ravenous' female sexuality, a type of 'unnatural' desire that endangers the stability and phallic investiture of masculinity. The only female character of *Il boss*, Adriana Santilli plays Rina D'Aniello, daughter of mobster Don Giuseppe D'Aniello. After she is kidnapped by a rival gang, she conveniently promotes herself as a sex toy for the *picciotti*, seemingly asking them to gang-rape her after being plied with alcohol and chastising them for not being 'competent' in the art of making love. Then, after she is rescued by hit-man Nick Lanzetta, the protagonist of the movie, played by Henry Silva, she repeats her number for Lanzetta in his hideout until he brutally accuses her of 'stealing his strength' and detaching him from the mafia war raging outside. *La strega in amore* is even more forceful in cornering the desiring woman or rather, as it is the case here, suppressing her altogether. Sergio is a womanizer, running away from marriages and objectifying females into *angeli della casa*, who notices an old woman named Consuelo following him around. Then the old woman, a witch who can evoke spirits at will, places an ad in a newspaper for a librarian. When Sergio shows up for the job, the witch makes her beautiful double Aura appear to win Sergio's attention and segregate him in the house. After realizing that he is the next in line in a long series of men that Consuelo has lured into the house, all killed by the previous librarians so that they can be Aura's only lovers, Sergio burns the witch in the courtyard of the house, reaffirming his phallic obligations.

Besides Leone's westerns, Italian horror films and thrillers are probably the noblest of the genres of the *cinema di profondità* or *di gastronomia*. After Bava, the frustration of sexual desire will be conveyed by the primitive *commedie pecorecce* or 'fart comedies,' and the macabre ritual of a zombie devouring himself in Aristide Massaccesi's 'gem' *Antropophagus* (1980), will generally hint at the atmosphere of stagnation in cinema, 'digested' by television, at a withdrawal that cannot go any further, and at the advanced decay of the country.

Notes

1. Maggie Günsberg, (2005), *Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 53.
2. Catherine O'Rawe, ''I padri e i maestri': Genre, auteurs, and absences in Italian film studies,' *Italian Studies*, Vol. 63, No. 2, Autumn 2008, 192.
3. Antonio Vitti, *Giuseppe De Santis and Postwar Italian Cinema* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 77.
4. Alessia Ricciardi wrote that '[A]lthough the traditional notion of "the masses" may not pertain directly to neorealism, to define the attitude exclusively in terms

of mere existential individualism seems overly reductive.' The scholar then cites *Umberto D.* and *Paisà* as examples of collectively shared experiences. In fact, Neorealism often managed to make its stories both individual and collective, as shown not only by the works mentioned by Ricciardi but also from the opening scene of *Ladri di biciclette*, in which Ricci is at first separated from a group of desperate unemployed people, then has to rejoin them once his name is called. See Alessia Ricciardi, 'The Italian redemption of cinema: Neorealism from Bazin to Godard,' in *The Romantic Review* 97.3.4, May-November 2006, 490.

5. Vittorio Cottafavi quoted in Luigi Ventavoli, *Pochi, maledetti e subito. Giorgio Venturini alla FERT* (Turin: Museo Nazionale del Cinema, 1992), 56.
6. Gianni Rondolino, *Vittorio Cottafavi: Cinema e televisione* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1980), 33.
7. Lino Micciché, *La ragione e lo sguardo* (Cosenza: Lerici, 1979), 215.
8. Alessia Ricciardi, 'The spleen of Rome: Mourning modernism in Fellini's *La dolce vita*,' *Modernism/Modernity* 7.2 (2000), 215.
9. Peter Bondanella, *The Cinema of Federico Fellini* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 298.
10. Ibid. 247.
11. Ibid. 322.
12. Frank Burke, *Fellini's Films: From Postwar to Postmodern* (New York: Macmillan, 1996), 162.
13. Millicent Marcus, 'Carne da grembo o carne in scatola? Divismo in Visconti's *Anna* and *La strega bruciata viva,'* in Tonia Caterina Riviello (ed.), *La donna nel cinema italiano* (Rome: Fabio Croce Editore, 2001), 72.
14. Noa Steimatsky, *Italian Locations: Reinhabiting the Past in Postwar Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), x.
15. The apparently conflicting interests of education and economic development were already the topic of a minor movie by Alberto Lattuada, *Scuola elementare* (1954). Originally conceived as a comedic vehicle for a famous duo of entertainers, Riccardo Billi and Mario Riva, *Scuola elementare* retains some genre elements – a romantic subplot, the regional comedy motifs capitalizing on the clash between Billi, who comes from a small town in Lazio, and the Milanese aura of cosmopolitism – only to turn toward the end into a bittersweet commentary on the residual function that education seems to enjoy in an era of frenzied industrialization and incorporate a marvelous quasi-documentary sequence showing a prize ceremony with real teachers.
16. Günsberg, *Italian Cinema*, 96.

CONCLUSION: THE MISSING ITALY AND ITS MISSING CINEMA TODAY

Italy seems more and more like a country that is scared, or simply uninterested to discover what it really is.[1] The difference between contemporary works and the films analyzed in this volume is first and foremost that at the time someone embarked on a project of reclaiming the country, offering to the audience – constructed as citizens interested in being informed and educated – his take on the state of the nation: It is unclear who in today's Italy is invested with this task, and if the task is of any interest in the first place. The questions about Italy's future that filled the exhilarating 1960s season remained largely unanswered, leading to the gloomy characterizations of the 1970s, like the *danse macabre* of mummified state, party and army officials at the end of *Signore e signori, buonanotte* (1976). Then came the escapist retreat of the 1980s, which brought about the era of the *cinema ombelicale* or 'cinema of navel gazing,' a tendency in which filmmakers' inward looking stands as a refusal to scrutinize the causes behind the country's decline, like Ettore Scola's *La terrazza* (1980) where 'zombies' do not arrive from graves but from all sectors of Italian society. The movies of Giuseppe Tornatore, later works by Scola, generational portraits by Nanni Moretti, but also the creations of *i nuovi comici* seemed to inject new blood into contemporary Italian cinema, only to hasten its demise despite short-lived success at the box office. After dismissing Italian cinema's 'pseudo-political ambitions,' Deleuze quotes Marco Montesano:

> in spite of conceptual appearances, it is an institutionalized cinema, because the conflict represented is the conflict calculated and controlled

> by the institution. It is a kind of theater; it is a narcissistic, historicist, moralizing cinema.[2]

A narcissistic culture and a decomposed political system seem to feed off each other: The explosion of the B-movies movement has been compared to the corruption of a decaying corpse. In their book *Italia Reloaded*, Christian Caliandro and Pier Luigi Sacco insist on the 'self-devouring' nature of Italy's zombie movies by Lucio Fulci, Ruggero Deodato, Bruno Mattei, Aristide Massaccesi, and Umberto Lenzi as opposed to George Romero's metaphorical operations. The screen only apparently divides the Italian zombies from the resigned citizenship of the living dead. It is in fact a two-sided mirror, or an open gate:

> Romero's Italian epigones . . . stage . . . a collapse that is both of production . . . and social: they represent . . . the end of an epoch with no sign whatsoever of a new beginning on the horizon. It is a cinema that, like its stories, phagocytizes and cannibalizes itself and its tradition. . . . Italian zombies . . . seem to have interiorized, at a deep and irrational level, the crisis *outside* the screen, rejecting every intellectual and authorial option. Thus, they hypostatize the fears and the ghosts paralyzing an Italian society that is at the same time at a standstill and on the run, during a complete and dangerous mutation towards a version of itself that it does not know at all. They incarnate the sense of loss of collective identity, a drift that does not seem to have almost anything temporary or transitional.[3]

However, at least those zombies should be commended because they were not afraid of showing their putrefaction, unlike Alberto Sordi in the late stage of his career, or the *nuovi comici* Roberto Benigni and Carlo Verdone, whose function seemed to ultimately make us miss the golden age of the *commedie scoreggione* with Lino Banfi.

The leitmotif of mummification seems to inform various aspects of Italian life, for example the cultural heritage: Italy's monuments, Caliandro and Sacco say, propagate an idea of Italianness as fiction, as representation and imitation of the past. So how did Italy become a fossilized country for old men? It is time to give a hug to all those scholars who lamented that the philosophy of Antonio Gramsci, the allegedly ready-made option to renovate Italian culture and disintegrate old practices and privileges was overlooked by the Italian intelligentsia. They should rest assured that the lost potential of Gramsci in the 'liberation' of the culture is regained in the daily homage that economic and political powers pay to his praxis of cultural hegemony, making Italy an accomplished Gramscian experiment. When it came to

applying the principles of cultural hegemony, Berlusconi beat the Left at the Left's own game: his era was made possible by the creation of his voters, shaped by his television channels, newspapers, soccer teams, and publishing houses. Italy's disjointed identities and interests coalesced around the erotic bravado emanating from his new post-democratic brand of populism, appropriately labeled by journalist Luigi Castaldi as 'gentismo.' In turn, the Left's cultural impasse – or, possibly, its own conflict of interest – made sure that the anti-Berlusconi option would in fact be reduced to an interested pose, a façade, when not turning into an altogether explicit support. If Roberto Benigni makes fun of Berlusconi but picks Berlusconi's Medusa for the distribution of his 'masterpieces,' if Roberto Saviano blames Berlusconi for the resurgence of organized crime but publishes for Mondadori, the impression is that of two oligarchies endorsing each other. One does not even need to go back to the strategic role the PCI had in 1985 in making sure that Berlusconi could keep his TV channels to see that the mechanism of complicity is efficiently ingrained and abundantly oiled. True to its hagiographical canonization as *isola felice*, the PCI, instead of fighting for equal access to the media market chose instead to focus on the immediate advantage: gaining control of a national channel, RAI 3, that has been under their sphere of influence ever since, just as RAI 1 was under the Christian Democrats and RAI 2 under the Socialists. Every faction was true to the practice of *lottizzazione* – the occupation of institutions from within so that the consensus created with favors will in turn accrue a political annuity that could potentially bypass even electoral low points.

Italy still does not have a blind trust law or juridical mechanisms regulating conflict of interests.[4] Those laws were not passed when the Left was in charge in 1996 and 2006, and DS – or Democratici di Sinistra, one of the parties born after the Communist Diaspora – leaders often, and always proudly, like Rep. Luciano Violante, claimed responsibility for not 'punishing' Silvio Berlusconi's assets, when in fact it was simply a matter of applying the law, as in the case of the Rete 4 channel, illegally broadcast on Italian soil, or introducing into Italy's legislation norms preventing tycoons from blatantly taking advantage of their media power for political purposes. Again, when the first cabinet led by Berlusconi fell on December 22, 1994, the post-Communist leader and future Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema personally reassured Berlusconi that the recent antitrust sentence of the Corte Costituzionale, stating that one of his three TV stations had to be dismissed because of violations to constitutional principles would not be abided. If we live in a condition of *stato spettacolo*, as a recent book by Anna Tonelli[5] is entitled, we also have to thank the diligent approach of the minority parties to the systemic problem of media and information in Italy.

Berlusconi had the luxury of choosing his 'enemies,' who were either working

for him or wanted to be just like him: for example, comedians David Riondino and Sabina Guzzanti, both of whom stashed the money earned for their anti-Berlusconi shows in foreign bank accounts, later brought it back to Italy thanks to a bill passed by a Berlusconi-led cabinet only to ultimately lose everything in a Ponzi scheme. Even Moretti's *Il Caimano* (2006), in spite of its lucid portrait, only offers a glimpse of Italy's anthropological mutation. The apocalyptic finale, in which Berlusconi/Moretti mobilizes the Republic's institutions he has corrupted and invokes the mandate obtained by the people to save himself from the judicial power was already a dated snapshot of a reality that seems to draw direct inspiration from Rogerio Sganzerla's *O bandido da luz vermelha* for its mix of nihilism, corruption, populism and abusive sex. If the *riformismo possibile* was already in bad shape in the 1960s, one can only imagine the Left's current state. The hegemonic strategy has proved so useless, leading to the current model of entertainment based on 'weapons of mass distraction'[6] that in 2010 many nostalgic voters earnestly endorsed the short-lived ambitions of Gianfranco Fini, former secretary of the neo-Fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano, then co-founder with Silvio Berlusconi of PdL or Partito delle Libertà. Fini finally grew weary of Berlusconi's personal use of the Republican institutions, putting together an agenda with many courageous points – citizenship to immigrants, noninterference of the Catholic Church in state affairs, among others – and attacking him in a virulent way that electors of minority parties could only dream of. Left-wing constituencies were so frustrated by the post-Communist/Catholic PD or Partito Democratico that a former Fascist like Fini was briefly idolized even by former hardcore Communists who in 1960 had fought in partisan Genoa to prevent the MSI congress.

Caliandro and Sacco also point out that, with no possible reformism in sight, the explosion of the B-movies phenomenon is physiological. Yesterday, the *poliziottesco* and the genres mentioned by Günsberg answered specific anxieties; today, the neorealist hunger for the real Italy is not in Ferzan Ozpetek's normalized cinema but vibrates in the works of Centoxcento and the many other film companies specializing in amateur porn. With the exception of a few diamonds in the rough, Italy's missing cinema consists of Benigni's love declarations to his stiff wife, Tornatore's *fellinate*, Christmas *cinepanettoni*, minimalist social dramas, generic comedies with a generic Southern flavor, and a couple of other minor *filoni* – the stuff, you know, that basically makes you feel like watching the entire *Alien* and *Predator* franchises just for detoxifying purposes. The scope of the filmmaking gaze gets narrower and narrower: folk and ethnic nostalgia in cinema and music, with the predominance of Southern dialects, points to a blind preservation of local cultures. It is a tendency that, minus the brutal and politically incorrect language, shares the same divisive vision of forces like the Northern League. The oligarchic fossilization of the country proceeds at full speed, politically and culturally: Berlusconi's era may

be over, but the protagonists that made that era possible are still there, and the avenues of democratic representation are still obstructed.

Satiric journalist and comedian Gianni Ippoliti, famous for his corrosive, demystifying comments on Italian life, once declared, 'Newspapers are talking about a revival of Italian cinema at this Venice Film Festival: my suggestion is to let us know beforehand when such revivals are scheduled, so we can prepare ourselves adequately for the event.' Such skepticism is equally met by a number of scholars and simple cinephiles feeling oppressed by the nostalgic memories of the good old times and looking with unaffected disbelief at the extreme poverty of Italy's cinematic situation. Hence the excavations, the debates, the screenings, the Tarantinos 'revealing' to Italian audiences and scholarship the hidden gems, the 'Kings of B's,' the multiplicity of commercial and institutional initiatives aimed at questioning the state of things. One of the pernicious and embarrassing fruits of Italy's policy of public funding is the phenomenon of *cinema invisibile*; that is, a number of movies, often backed by public financing through the infamous article 28, whose quality is so mediocre that they never make it to the theater. And yet, there are emerging directors whose works stand as important contributions capable of competing with much more fashionable, publicized, and visible national cinematographies. The independent *Giro di lune tra terra e mare* (1997), by Giuseppe M. Gaudino, was the most noteworthy Italian film of the 1990s: it is an amazing blend of experimental techniques and mythical method, revving up relatively customary topics such as the dissolution of the traditional family and the clash of patriarchal culture and modern development in Southern Italy. Gaudino shows the dissolution of a contemporary Neapolitan household while historical and mythical heroes emerge from the cracks of time and interact with the members of the family. Gaudino declared that he first thought about the movie as a project with a neorealistic approach, soon to realize that it would have been too generic and predictable. The eerie landscapes of Daniele Ciprì and Franco Maresco, active since the late 1980s, a depressing stage of recursive rituals and gestures acted by a plethora of deformed and monstrous bodies – in their intention, a frontal attack against any compromising ideology and aesthetics of complacency and consolation – reminded critics of the 'necrorealism' ascribed to the Russian filmmakers Evgenij Yufit and Vladimir Maslov.[7] A realist–postmodernist negotiation informed the outstanding *Lamerica* (1994) by Gianni Amelio, influenced by Antonioni and exploring the anxiety generated by 'the twentieth-century subject's apparently effortless ability to relocate herself ideologically.'[8] The epistemic research of Paolo Benvenuti, at the crossroads of Foucault and Rossellini, gave us the austere and terrifying *Gostanza da Libbiano* (2000), the story of a witchcraft trial against an illiterate countrywoman, who to satisfy her inquisitors and escape tortures, made up incredible stories of extraterrestrial encounters with the devil charged with

a strong sexual character, thus using her power of fabulation and developing a female subjectivity that proved extremely dangerous, more so than regular heresy, for the Church. The process of identification that Gostanza undertakes is not new in Italian cinema. It was also present in Brunello Rondi's *Il demonio* (1963), a movie that inspired William Friedkin's *The Exorcist*, the story of a young peasant girl who, after being left by her betrothed, can channel her desperation only in a way anthropologically approved by the Church. But the importance of *Gostanza da Libbiano* lies in the fact that the movie is set in 1594 but the exploration of one of the identitarian modules left to women in Italy, that of witch and evil seductress, still resonates today as a legacy of Berlusconi's rule. The most radical experiment, though, is that of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, two filmmakers who take the ultimate step toward the complete dismissal of fiction cinema and the return to the ontology of the photographic image, by rephotographing old material shot at the beginning of the century during crucial moments of world history – World War I, the colonization of Africa, but also the emergence of mass tourism. Their goal is a return of the repressed, erased by Western rule and brutal cultural aggregation. Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi, who gained worldwide notoriety in 1987 with *Dal Polo all'Equatore*, try to give new dignity and visibility to the cannon fodder of history (the colonized, the brutalized, the eradicated), originally marginalized and treated as insignificant details in pictures blatantly celebrating the conquerors from and the superiority of Western civilization.

The neorealist lesson, not understood as generic pauperist aesthetics but as an exploration of the boundaries of the image, seems to be a methodological shelter among young filmmakers such as Michelangelo Frammartino, Giorgio Diritti, and Tizza Covi. Theirs is an enterprise for the renovation of film language and for exposing the old and new intolerances and disparities in contemporary Italy. One of the finest emerging filmmakers is Pietro Marcello, whose *La bocca del lupo* (2009) shows influence from diverse cineastes such as Pasolini and Artavazd Pelesjan, but is also reminiscent of Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi in its attempt to rebuild a truthful, shared national memory. However, it is unclear whether Marcello's new, lush *cinema di poesia* can be a viable solution that will bring spectators back to theaters. It is a contradiction caught by Gianni Canova, who hails Marcello, Frammartino and Covi as great directors, but complains that their works are never shown by the RAI channels, almost implying that national television is the best medium to appreciate them.[9] Canova is a great evaluator of talent and recently went as far as defining contemporary Italian cinema as one of the most interesting in the world, citing the latest works by Gianni Celati, Marco Bellocchio, Giorgio Diritti, Paolo Sorrentino, Matteo Garrone. Without taking sides, one also has to bring into the fray Sergio Citti's fantastic realism and Lizzani's appreciation of Marco

Tullio Giordana as the representative of an industrial template that can in turn stand as another option for Italian cinema. Television and cinema can in fact be allies when one thinks of Michele Placido's *Romanzo criminale* (2005), a movie that sparked intense activity in the development of a television series.

Italian film probably needs to reconsider the notion of quality and move on in terms of imaginary influences coming from its past. One auteur who seemed to have successfully escaped the neo-Neorealist mantra is Paolo Sorrentino. Sorrentino avoids social engagement and critical realism but, through a surreal and defamiliarizing style rich with avant-garde pictorial references – as in *Il divo* (2008), about the 'extraordinary life' of Giulio Andreotti – presents an overflowing, deformed reality fraught with tragic ambiguities.[10] Another name one has to mention is that of Paolo Virzì. In his finest works like *My name is Tanino* (2002), *Caterina va in città* (2003) and *Tutta la vita davanti* (2008) Virzì convincingly engages topics such as the absence of shared national values, the United States-Italy relationship, similar to the one between a stern father and a puerile son needing direction, and the lack of perspectives of young people who have to go from a decrepit education system to a schizophrenic job market.

In general, however, cineastes refuse to take a hard look at Italy, and its citizens do the same. Oligarchies that support each other do not disturb each other too much. Nobody said a thing when Robert De Mattei, vice-president of the public authority National Council of Research (CNR) – whose mission is to 'advance and promote research in the main fields of knowledge for the socio-economic development of the country' – on the occasion of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, imperturbably said on the FM of Radio Maria that, 'in suffering, God's gifts of mercy are more abundant,' 'God has the right to provoke natural catastrophes because he does not have to renounce his creation project' and that, 'once the veil of judgment will be raised, perhaps one will find out that those premature deaths were meant to shorten lives of misery and pain.'[11] Italy made excellent strides in adopting the Greek template for financial and ethical default: fake bipolarism, rampant corruption, unserviceable tax system, and unbounded privileges to the local church. Readers have an embarrassment of choice if they want to find out how their tax money is wasted today with the same Italian creativity perfected during the good old days of the economic boom.[12] In Western countries, if a citizen works for the interests of another state he will be accused of high treason: in Italy, if you work for the interests of the Vatican you will be given a seat in the parliament and plenty of space on television debates. It is almost impossible to open a newspaper and not find outraged cries of shock: 'I partiti ci sono costati 470 milioni in cinque anni,'[13] writes Fabio Martini in one article outlining the 'statalization' of political parties whose ranks are paid by public agencies and authorities. A recent bill on reimbursements, effectively adding several million euros to the expenses

sustained during elections, provided parties with unprecedented liquidity that treasurers invest in bonds and sovereign funds while chiseling money for themselves and living the good life. But the reaction seems to always be a mix of resignation and repressed resentment, noting the lack of political instruments for change and the pernicious acclimatization to corruption by a citizenship made up of increasingly unlearned, politically gullible, economically illiterate members. Italy's pockets of excellence are shrinking as key sectors for the life of citizens, such as justice, fall miserably apart. Due to lack of resources and corporative interests, trials in Italy last so long that an average of about 160,000 proceedings lapse every year, leaving crimes such as corruption, embezzlement, fraud and manslaughter without a convicted culprit. That which is even more worrisome is to read the same evaluations that opened this volume some forty years later, accompanied by the belief that the vices are now gangrenous and cannot be extirpated. John Gillingham writes about the 1990s:

> As in the realm of politics, restoration would only gradually replace reform . . . There was also little sign of an emerging 'new economy' . . . Because Italian university education remained archaic and resistant to change, technical transfer to the private sphere was minimal. The lack of adequate legal and financial infrastructures limited access to capital and hindered corporate growth. Italy attracted the least per-capita foreign investment in Europe . . . Unemployment remained in double digits while the economy all but stood still.[14]

'A confused, shortsighted country,' Zucconi said at the beginning of the book. The widow of one of the workers of the ACNA chemical plant in Cengio, in Liguria, had the following reaction when describing the relationship her family entertained with the company that had polluted the waters nearby and caused cancer to many of its employees and the local population: 'I hate this plant that killed my husband and does not hire my son.' Those words were collected by writer Guido Ceronetti, who also insisted on the neopopulist concept of *gente*: 'The more a plant kills people, the more it is loved by the people it decimates and among which spreads cancer.'[15] With no new youth protest movements in sight, past ones seem all the more laughable and grotesque. Former terrorists and protesters frequently come out renouncing their political engagement, criticizing the lack of clobbering from the officers' side at the time of their rallies, an action that they believe would have probably seasoned and straightened out youths like them.[16] Similarly, in the words of a then-protester and now CEO of his namesake fashion firm, Benetton, when asked about his lingering existential contradiction, he stated that both situations had a 'global' impact so they were totally reconciled. All the above 'sound bites' come full circle with the quote from Zucconi. During *Russian Ark* (2002), the Marquis de Custine asks

Aleksandr Sokurov 'What is Russia today?' – a question to which the director replies, with a bitter grin, 'I don't know.' At the very least, democracy should be a struggle where citizens and media have at their disposal some tools to fight against power abuse and conflicts of interests, tools that the Russian people do not enjoy: and the sneering question asked by the Marquis and the resigned answer provided by Sokurov seem unfortunately appropriate for Italy as well.

Notes

1. For example, the *Corriere della Sera*, supposedly the most authoritative Italian newspaper relies on this piece written by a journalist of the New York Times to explain the tragedy of profligating public spending *a pioggia*. http://www.corriere.it/cronache/11_settembre_16/tortora-comitini-specchio-spreco-denaro-pubblico_ef4105fa-e093-11e0-aaa7-146d82aec0f3.shtml (accessed April 20, 2012).
2. Marco Montesano in Gilles Deleuze, 'Un manifesto di meno,' in Carmelo Bene and Gilles Deleuze, *Sovrapposizioni* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2002), 107.
3. Christian Caliandro and Pierluigi Sacco, *Italia Reloaded* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), 60–1.
4. After the Decreto n. 694 allowed Berlusconi to cement his empire and boost his notoriety, the Milanese entrepreneur decided to run for prime minister in 1994 and subsequently in 1996, 2001, 2004, 2006, and 2008. But before he decided to pursue a political career, Berlusconi would exchange reciprocal advantages with the PCI, such as investing in advertisement for the journal of the party faction *i miglioristi*, from whose ranks comes Giorgio Napolitano, elected president of the Republic in 2006. In return, Silvio Berlusconi was recommended by the PCI to the Soviet authorities in Moscow and in May 1988 secured a lucrative contract, becoming the sole distributor for advertisements in the Soviet Union. The events leading to the commercial agreement between the Soviet television and Berlusconi are reconstructed in Michele De Lucia, *Il baratto. Il PCI e le televisioni: Le intese e gli scambi tra il comunista Veltroni e l'affarista Berlusconi negli anni ottanta* (Rome: Kaos, 2008). By using the term 'baratto' the author insists on the 'bartering' nature of the trade between Berlusconi and the PCI and in general on the lack of transparency and the consociative nature of economic practices in Italy.
5. Anna Tonelli, *Stato spettacolo. Pubblico e privato dagli anni '80* (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2010).
6. The transition from an elitist intellectual hegemony to the subculture of gossip and reality shows is described by Alessandro Panarari in *L'egemonia sottoculturale: L'Italia da Gramsci al gossi*p (Turin: Einaudi, 2010).
7. On Gaudino, see the essay 'The Cinema of Giuseppe M. Gaudino and Edoardo Winspeare: Between tradition and experiment' by Daniela La Penna (with the reference to Neorealism for Gaudino's film, almost a ritual homage, and the just acknowledgement of the role that Enrico Ghezzi's *Fuori Orario* plays in generating interest and critical attention on works showcased only at Film Festivals, and sometimes not even there); on Ciprì and Maresco, 'Daniele Ciprì and Franco Maresco: Uncompromising visions – aesthetics of the apocalypse' by Ernest Hampson: both essays are in William Hope (ed.), *Italian Cinema: New Directions* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005).
8. Constantin Parvulescu, 'Inside the beast's cage: Gianni Amelio's Lamerica and the dilemmas of post-1989 leftist cinema,' *Italian Culture*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2010, 50–67.

9. See Gianni Canova, 'Il risveglio del cinema italiano,' in *Micromega – Almanacco del cinema*, 6/2011, 3–8.
10. In an interview given to Malcom Pagani, Sorrentino scoffs at the notion of a realist cinema, mocking those enthusiasts who 'commemorate the works of Paolo Benvenuti and Franco Piavoli.' As positive model Sorrentino seems to have in mind an alternative to Hollywood, where entertainment and spectacle go hand in hand with cinematic inquiry. See 'Paolo Sorrentino in conversazione con Malcom Pagani: Alla ricerca del sogno,' in *Micromega – Almanacco del cinema*, 6/2011, 22–39.
11. The entire radio interview can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIm9E76-jtA (accessed April 20, 2012).
12. When it comes to parties, as documented in books like *L'Italia dei privilegi*, written by Raffaele Costa (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), or *Il costo della democrazia*, written by Cesare Salvi and Massimo Villone (Milan: Mondadori, 2005), four billion euros seems to be the yearly cost of political personnel – more than 150,000 people plus the 300,000 external consultants, in addition to grant aids to party TV channels, journals, and newspapers often with barely a few hundred viewers/readers. It is a number that can skyrocket to more than twenty billion euros and includes electoral refunds, free transportation, 'baby pensions,' free access to sport events and art exhibitions and other benefits. Four billion euros is also the approximate cost of the Catholic Church, as one can read in *Chiesa padrona* by Roberto Beretta (*Chiesa padrona: Strapotere, monopolio e ingerenza nel cattolicesimo italiano*, Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 2006) and *La questua: Quanto costa la chiesa agli italiani* by Curzio Maltese (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2008). Around one billion euros comes from the *otto per mille*, the direct funding tax-payers can select on tax forms, with most of it allocated through a proportional repartition of the *otto per mille* from citizens who elect not to pay to any organization. Then there are tax breaks and tax exemptions for hotels and commercial businesses, an issue whose surface was only scratched by the Vatican-friendly cabinet led by Mario Monti. Another 650 million euros is allocated for the stipends of teachers of the Catholic religion, chosen by local bishops and not appointed through public searches; plus financial backing on the occasion of the Jubilee, ritual rallies, and other events arbitrarily labelled as 'special' by the Protezione Civile; and finally, the total tax exemption for all the activities related to religious tourism.
13. Fabio Martini, 'I partiti ci sono costati 470 milioni in cinque anni,' *La Stampa,* August 13, 2005, http://89.97.204.228/fparticolipdf/63279.pdf (accessed April 25, 2012).
14. The chapter is entitled 'The failing Italian miracle,' in John Gillingham, *European Integration, 1950–2003: Superstate or New Market Economy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 178.
15. A reply by Paolo Mieli in response to a Letter to the Editor, 'Stabilimenti assassini: È sempre la stessa storia,' *Corriere della Sera*, April 7, 2002, 37.
16. No discussion on terrorism and youth protest in Italy would be complete without the obligatory reference to conspiracy theory. Sergio D'Elia, a former member of the Prima Linea terrorist group currently serving as the secretary of the anti-death penalty organization Nessuno Tocchi Caino affiliated to the Partito Radicale, insinuated that the state let his terrorist group and others carry out their robberies and assassinations and was to be held responsible. In 1983 D'Elia was sentenced to thirty years for his role in the assassination of Police official Fausto Dionisi and then pardoned after five.

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